

The RETURN TO PELLUCIDAR *by* EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

ANOTHER  
GIANT  
ISSUE

# AMAZING STORIES

FEBRUARY 25c



**KIDNAPED INTO THE FUTURE**

By WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

AMAZING STORIES

VOLUME 16  
NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY  
1942



#### NOTE HOW LISTERINE GARGLE REDUCED GERMS



BEFORE

The two drawings illustrate height of range in germ reductions on mouth and throat surfaces in test cases before and after gargling Listerine Antiseptic. Fifteen minutes after gargling, germ reductions up to 96.7% were noted; and even one hour after, germs were still reduced as much as 80%.



AFTER

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Every man likely to go into military service, every soldier, sailor, marine, should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty at pay up to 6 times a private's base pay. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. IT'S SMART TO TRAIN FOR RADIO NOW.



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**FEBRUARY**  
**1942**

# AMAZING STORIES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

VOLUME 16  
NUMBER 2

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Front cover painting by L. Raymond Jones illustrating a scene from "Kidnaped Into The Future"

Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul depicting "A City On Ganymede"

Illustrations by Rod Ruth; Robert Fuqua; J. Allen St. John; Jay Jackson; Ned Hadley; Joe Sewell

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Volume 16  
Number 2



# IS YOUR Rupture GETTING Worse?

It is a terrible thing to feel that your rupture is getting worse, growing larger and larger, without your *seeming* to be able to do anything about it! Haunting fear destroys mental poise and makes many *despondent*. Inability to be active takes the *physical joys* out of life.

Yes, it is terrible . . . but far more a tragedy when it is all so *absolutely needless*! Now please—and again please—do not think that this is an attempt to capitalize on your misfortune in an effort to just sell you something. We simply have information for you that has brought deliverance and joy to about 3,000,000 persons: men, women and children . . . *facts* that have satisfied thousands of doctors . . . *facts* we want *you* to consider, to your everlasting good!

## STOP IT, STOP IT!

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There is no claptrap magic about the famous Brooks Air-Cushion Rupture Appliance. It isn't something experimental. It has been used and improved for years. Over 9000 doctors (who know about rupture) wear the BROOKS, or recommend it to many, many thousands of patients. What is the Patented Automatic Air-Cushion? Just this.

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**X Where's YOUR Rupture?**

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State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐

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Hard pad gouging in keeps Rupture open and prevents natural healing.

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BROOKS Air-Cushion does not spread rupture opening. Gives nature a real opportunity!

# The OBSERVATORY

by THE Editor

No science fiction fan should miss the gigantic new SPECIAL issue of FLYING and POPULAR AVIATION, dated January and on sale December 9, devoted exclusively to U. S. Naval Aviation. It's the amazing story of science fiction come true! Your editor has seen advance pages on it, and it's a *must* on your list!

AS we write this, we have a feeling we've forgotten something, but while we struggle to remember, we'll take a peek at what's in this issue. First, we especially liked John York Cabot's first really long story. It's "The Man Who Changed History", and for a time-travel yarn, it's really got something. Wouldn't we all like to go back and try to change a few things around! Like booting the executioner where he sits down just as he's about to chop off the head of Mary, Queen of Scots, or to slip a shot of permanent hullyaby-juice into Attila's morning tea!

NEXT there's Burroughs, with the first of three great stories about Pellucidar, the world inside the earth. Old favorites David Innes and Abner Perry come back to delight all Burroughs fans with some really fine adventures in the strange world where the horizons go up instead of down!

AND speaking of time-travel, we have a yarn from the master himself! Ralph Milne Farley with the finest time-travel yarn he has ever written, and you'll all concede that's saying a mouthful in any column! It's the kind of a yarn you dream about—it's that perfect.

THERE'S a professor of economics or something or other up at Milwaukee (Wisconsin) who tells the lads who attend Marquette University (where they have good football teams as well as good professors!) what it's all about. But as a pastime, he writes fiction. He attends regular meetings of a group of writers of which Farley is a member, and we especially remember the hot toddies he makes when the meeting is a winter one at his own home. The standing joke of the group is Leo A. Schmidt, genius with plots which he never writes. But now he has confounded them all. He has written a science

fiction yarn which he tells us confidentially is not a fiction yarn at all, but quite true. And we believe him. We've seen his time machine ourselves, and believe us, it's quite a gadget. We once took a trip in it . . .

However, "The Return of Man," presented in this issue, seems to us to be one of the most unusual and tightly plotted stories we've seen in many a day. A work of art, if you please!

ON the cover you'll find L. Raymond Jones' painting, illustrating William P. McGivern's yarn "Kidnaped Into The Future". We promised you this new artist last issue, and here he is. How do you like him? We'll be back with him again soon.

WHILE we speak in superlatives, we can't forget Robert Moore Williams, who has begun to scintillate with a blinding brilliance in the last twelve months. His "Voyage Into The Lightning" is a powerful story.

There's a story behind a story here too. Bob came to Chicago some six months ago, and brought along two ideas for stories. We had a cup of coffee—or was it seven?—with him, as our regular function in the Coffee Club, and we tried to muddle him up by combining the two ideas. We laughed up our sleeve as we sent him back to St. Louis with an impossible job. But what a manuscript came pounding into our office some weeks later! Wotta man that Williams is! You just peek at page 98 and you'll begin to get a slight hint of what we mean. You can't confuse that guy—not a bit.

SAY, how'd we happen to get so many stellar names in one issue? Eric Frank Russell, Duncan Farnsworth, Don Wilcox, Isaac Asimov—we've only got 144 pages . . . *blinding explosions, now we know what we did!* We put 240 pages inside the covers of this month's issue, just like we did last month! Oh golly, nobody told us *this* was a special issue. Oh dear, what are those roaring presses saying? Wait'll the publishers see *this!* Well, dear readers, every managing editor comes to the end of his rope sometime. We guess this is our time . . . Jeepers, what were we *thinking* of! Slow, mournful music, Mr. Mendelssohn!

THIS paragraph is in the nature of an open letter to Sam Moskowitz, who represents a cross section of science fiction fans by being the publisher of a fan magazine. First, Sam, you ask for an article from us on our future aims. Well, that's something we can't do—not because we don't want to, but we just haven't any future aims. We build our magazine to such a modern tempo that to predict even next month's magazine would simply be hazardous a guess. *AMAZING STORIES*, next month, may present a new streamlined format. We don't know. It's progress itself that decides each issue. We keep abreast the times, or a little bit ahead, if we can.

Next, you doubt that we'll give the fans a page wherein they can present news and comment on the science fiction fan world in general, in an effort to build up fan clubs and fandom into a unified, progressive front.

AS part of our policy, we don't advertise "publications" and your fan magazines are considered such. But we can mention fan clubs. If you have an official club pamphlet, naturally we will be glad to announce to your membership all over the country, in this page, the fact that such a pamphlet is about to be issued, and the date.

We will also be glad to give news of meetings, reports on magazines, stories, authors, policy, likes of readers, dislikes of readers, ideas, suggestions, social events, or anything that can possibly be part of a fan club.

And we'll announce future aims, officers, elections, conventions, anything. But we won't participate in biased arguments, support or denounce any particular faction, or publish political or religious views. In short, it must be something *based* definitely in science fiction as we present it, or as the fans would like to have us present it. We will help you build science fiction. Which, we believe, is the aim of the fan clubs.

SO, if you want that page now, simply appoint a "fan club editor" who will act as the clearing house for the material just mentioned, and who will forward it to us in concise, clear, un-repetitious fashion, and we'll publish it. We think all our readers will be interested in news about themselves. How about it, Sam?

WE have been encouraged recently, by the comments of various fans on the debate that has been going on via this column regarding fandom, and we might add that not since 1925 has there been such a purposeful volume of activity evidenced in the fan world. And it has adopted a constructive turn, too. We have a hunch that the next World Science Fiction Convention, in Los Angeles will be quite a spectacle.

WE hear, too, of a Midwest Conference to be held sometime in December in Jackson, Michigan. Doc Smith will be the leading light. Mark Reinsberg is our informant, and he says he will journey from Chicago to Jackson for the event, carrying with him original covers and illustrations from *AMAZING STORIES* and *Fantastic Adventures* for a club auction to raise funds to carry on their work to further science fiction.

ROBERT FUQUA, who has illustrated all the Adam Link stories since "I, Robot," is working on a new cover which will feature Eando Binder's popular character. We'll present it in a month or two. Incidentally, there's an interesting story behind Robert Fuqua and Eando Binder and Adam Link.

It seems Eando Binder, who liked Robert Fuqua very much, never knew, until very recently, that the illustrator was an old friend of the Binder family, and that they had gone to school together. So when they met in Chicago in October, Jack Binder, artist brother of Eando, asked Fuqua (yes, it's a pen name) why he never considered illustrating for the pulps, and *AMAZING* in particular. Mr. Fuqua tells us he had a very interesting moment in admitting modestly that he had illustrated Adam Link for three years. It's a small world, isn't it? We wouldn't be surprised to



"We had to change it a bit for Adam Link."

learn that Adam Link went to the same school too!

ACCORDING to our fan mail, a new star has risen into *AMAZING STORIES'* artistic firmament. He is Malcolm Smith, whose January cover is receiving the rave mail of the month. Well, we have three more covers on hand—and wow!

(Concluded on page 25)

The Amazon from the future pressed several buttons on her belt and little flames leaped out



# Kidnaped Into the Future

by WILLIAM P. MCGIVERN

I WAS stretched flat on the stage of the *Empire* theater trying to get a good candid shot of the big cellophane space ship, when Sid Hunt, the small, volatile producer of *Follies of the Future*, came storming out of the wings.

He shot one rapid glance about the stage and then clapped both hands to his head despairingly.

"Where is she?" he moaned. "Where

is she? She should be on stage now. The curtain goes up in three minutes."

I took the camera away from my face and sat up.

"So will my blood pressure," I said. "Let me remind you that I was hired as a press agent, not as a combination nurse, stage hand, stooge and crystal ball gazer. How do I know where she is? Did you try her dressing room?"

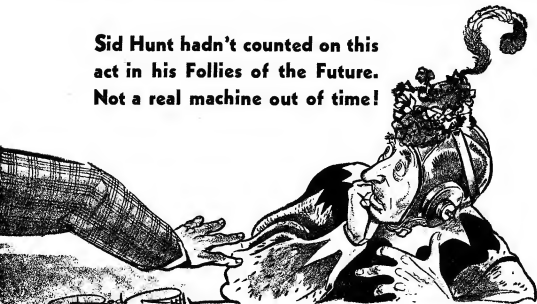
"No," Sid Hunt said rather sulkily. "I was going to try the obvious places last."

"Fine," I said, climbing to my feet. "Now while you're looking in back of all the pictures and in all the ashtrays, I'll try her dressing room and then her apartment. At that you'll probably have better results."

But I was wrong. Ruby was in her dressing room for a change, and ready to go on.

"Darling," I said sweetly. "I don't want to change any plans you might have made, but the curtain is going up in a few seconds and we'd all appreciate it if you'd put in an appear-

**Sid Hunt hadn't counted on this  
act in his *Follies of the Future*.  
Not a real machine out of time!**



ance for old times' sake."

Blissfully ignoring me, she pirouetted before the full length mirror, smiling charmingly at herself.

"Mr. Hunt," I said patiently, "has just collapsed from nervous prostration. If there's a streak of Florence Nightingale in you, you won't keep him on the rack a second longer than necessary."

"Don't I look pretty?" she asked, noticing me for the first time.

"Yes," I said. I couldn't lie about it. She was supposed to be wearing the Costume Of Tomorrow. If our conception of the next century's attire is correct, I certainly envy my great-great-grandson. That is if there are girls like Ruby around to wear them.

With her lovely auburn hair and slender, beautifully molded chassis, she would have made the male inhabitants of *any* century sit up and stare.

I reluctantly transferred my gaze from her more obvious charms to her wide innocent brown eyes.

"Your mascara is running," I said, "but I doubt if anyone will look up to notice it. That, however, is beside the point. You have, my beautiful bird-brain, exactly twenty-three seconds to take your place before the last curtain call. Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

Her eyes flew to the small clock on her vanity.

"Oh," she wailed, "why didn't somebody tell me?"

Without even a last glance in the mirror she skipped past me and down the corridor.

**I** SHOOK my head and walked after her, thinking gloomily of the fall on the head I had suffered as a baby. I always felt that it was this misfortune which had led indirectly to my becoming a press agent. For if I hadn't been

dropped on my head I might have grown up with enough common sense to keep out of this bug-house racket.

Muttering to myself like Hamlet I turned a corner and bumped squarely into the nattily attired figure of Dapper Dan Lopez.

"You're just the man I want to see," Dapper Dan smiled.

"The feeling is not mutual," I growled and started off, but he caught my arm. His black eyes were glittering, but the thin smile was still on his lips.

"No sense being hard headed," he said gently.

I turned and faced him. Dapper Dan was a front man for one of the town's unwholesome mobsters, Tony Scarlotti. Scarlotti, whose finger was in every lucrative pie in the city, wanted a cut in on the show.

"I told you before," I said quietly, "that Sid Hunt wants no part of you or Scarlotti."

"Hunt has a lot of confidence in you," Dapper Dan suggested casually. "You might put in a kind word for the boss."

I smiled sweetly.

"Will you crawl back under your damp rock," I said, "and tell Scarlotti that I wouldn't recommend him for a job stoking the furnaces of Hades. As for you," I went on, "if you aren't out of this theater in four and two-tenths seconds flat I will personally throw you out."

"Listen sucker," Dapper Dan barked, "I—"

I grabbed him by the arm, jerked him around and with a hand at his collar and seat, propelled him forcibly toward the door. The watchman scrambled to his feet and jerked open the door as he saw us coming.

With a hearty heave I pitched the twisting, swearing mug into the alley. He hit the cobblestones off balance and sprawled forward onto his face.

"That," I said to the watchman, "is one of the lower members of the rodent family. If you ever see it scurrying around the premises again, step on it."

Dapper Dan Lopez crawled to his feet, shouted something quite unprintable in my general direction and then hurried angrily off.

I brushed my hands off, but I still felt as if I needed a good bath with plenty of strong soap to remove the feeling the niftily dressed mobster had left with me.

When I got to the wings and took my usual position alongside Sid Hunt, Ruby was just starting her first song.

I took a quick gander at the audience and saw that they were settling back comfortably to be entertained and thrilled.

**I**F I DO say it myself it was a pretty clever revue, as those things go. The theme was supposedly completely futuristic. The stage backdrop was a mammoth black drape against which blazing discs of light were in relief. These discs were tagged Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, etc. In the middle was the brightest and biggest blazer, Old Sol, himself. Against this background cellophane space ships floated idly. It was very pretty.

As props we had huge globular contraptions labeled Time Machines. More atmosphere was provided by papier mache atomic cannons, disintegrator guns and such. From there on the show was in no way different than any time-honored Broadway musical.

The chorines were very scantily clad in abbreviated outfits we called Space Suits and they moved through their paces with the good old wiggle that nineteen-forty developed. Maybe it was goofy, but the public ate it up, which may or may not prove anything.

By this time Ruby had finished her first number, a torchy thing called *Jupiter Taught Me A Thing Or Two*, and was getting an enthusiastic hand.

She curtsied prettily, blowing kisses to the bald-headed cheering section in the first row.

Congratulating myself on the way things were starting out, I turned away for an instant to light a cigarette, and that was when it happened.

"Look!" Sid Hunt hissed, grabbing my arm.

There was such a mixture of shock and amazement in his voice that I wheeled to him quickly.

"What is it?" I snapped.

He was staring onto the stage at Ruby and pointing a trembling excited finger in her direction, too flabbergasted to speak.

I had my eyes off the stage possibly for the space of a few seconds, but when I turned them back I almost swallowed my cigarette.

For in that split second a thick globular machine had materialized on the stage beside Ruby.

"What kind of a gag is this?" Sid Hunt was yelling in my ear. "This isn't supposed to be in the act. Is this some of your doings, Flannigan?"

I was too shocked to answer. You'd think as long as I've been in show business that nothing could surprise me. But I felt as if I'd been kicked in the stomach by Man O' War.

The machine was reddish in color and looked somewhat like the props we had scattered about the stage, labeled Time Machines. On top of the strange machine was a mechanism that reminded me of the late model automobile headlights, wired for sound.

Sid Hunt was jerking my arm again. "Look!" he shrieked. "There's a man inside!"

He wheeled on me, shaking his fist

under my nose.

"This is your work," he yelled excitedly. "Trying to slip in some act without telling me about it. If it's a stinker I'll have you blacklisted from one coast to the other. You won't be able to get a job in New York, California, Chi—"

"Never mind the travelogue," I cut in. "I get the general idea. But I don't know a bit more about this damn thing than you do."

I turned back to the stage.

THE boss had not been kidding when he said a man was inside the machine. I could see him myself, hazily outlined through the glass shell, twisting knobs and gadgets frantically. He had on something that looked like a little boy's suit.

My eyes flicked to Ruby. She was standing within a few feet of the machine, her gorgeous eyes widening incredulously. I couldn't tell from her expression whether she was going to laugh or scream.

The audience had stopped applauding and now there was an irritable murmur of impatience running through it. They evidently thought the materialized machine part of the show, and they were a little tired of waiting for something to happen.

Suddenly from the disc on the top of the machine a brilliantly bright flash of orange light streamed, bathing Ruby in its glare. Only the edges of the beam were visible. The rest was like black light.

For an instant she stood stock still, her beautiful body outlined in the dazzling beam. Then she screamed loudly, the way a woman will do seeing a mouse. Not in pain or shock, but merely a cry of outraged surprise.

"Curtain!" yelled Sid Hunt.

Men sprang to obey him. In three

seconds the heavy drapes had touched the floor hiding the scene from the audience.

The stage became a confused nightmare as prop men, chorines and stage hands rushed out of the wings to gape at the strange machine. Sid Hunt dashed to the center of the stage shouting directions.

"Get this thing off the stage," he yelled, to the stagehands. Wheeling to the chorines, he waved his arms wildly, like a farmer shooing chicks.

"Line up," he shouted. "Get ready for the first act finale. The curtain's going back up in thirty seconds."

The machine which had caused the consternation was shoved off the stage into the wings, and a reasonable facsimile of order was restored.

I was right behind Sid Hunt as he hustled up to where the stagehands had shoved the globular machine. He circled it helplessly, a study in baffled rage.

"If this is a gag," he declared wrathfully, "someone is going to have his sense of humor kicked right in the pants."

Ruby was peering into the interior of the machine like a curious kitten.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "there's a man inside!"

"Go to the head of the class," I said. "We thought it was a tame elephant."

She laughed gaily.

"Whatever made you think that?" she asked.

"I give up," I said wearily. "I must be getting old."

Suddenly all of the chatter ceased as a lid on top of the contraption swung open. A second later a small man popped into sight. He had pleasant though rather grotesque features and small blue eyes that blinked uncertainly.

"Hello," he said shyly. "What year



is this?"

"What year is this?" Sid Hunt exploded, almost dancing in his rage. "I'll show you what it means to pull corny practical jokes on me." He wheeled to two burly stage hands. "Drag him down here."

The face of the occupant of the strange contraption clouded apprehensively.

"Maybe," he said apologetically, "I've made a mistake."

HE STARTED to retreat back into the depths of the machine, but he was too late. For the husky stagehands had grabbed his arms when he started to move, and with a businesslike efficiency hauled him over the side of the machine onto the floor.

He would have fallen had it not been for their support. Between the two heavy-set stagehands he looked woefully small and pathetic. His head came barely to their shoulders, and the absurd, boy scout costume he was wearing, gave him the appearance of a boy caught stealing jam.

But his features were pleasant if not distinguished, and his eyes beamed with a trusting innocence. His attitude was that of a person very puzzled and uncertain, but still unafraid.

Sid Hunt planted himself before him, hands on his hips.

"So," he shouted, "try and ruin my show with a cheap joke, will you? Who put you up to this?"

The little man from the machine looked carefully behind him to make sure that the explosive question was addressed to him. Assured that it was, he turned back to Sid Hunt, smiling shyly.

"My wife did," he said.

I wondered how much more of this Sid's blood pressure could stand. His face was flushed, and the cigar in his

mouth was being ground to pieces between his teeth.

"Who is your wife?" Sid asked in a strangling voice, that rose suddenly to a shriek. "And who are you?" he hollered. "Where are you from?"

The little man looked concerned.

"I'm 33," he said, "but—"

"I don't care how old you are," Sid Hunt screamed frantically. "Are you going to answer my questions, or would you rather talk to the police?"

The little man smiled, but without much enthusiasm.

"I wasn't referring to my age," he said anxiously. "33 is my number, my designation."

I thought I saw a little light. I tapped the little man on the shoulder, smiling reassuringly.

"Don't worry," I said soothingly. "Everything's going to be all right, Number 33."

I shot a warning glance at Sid Hunt, then tapped my head meaningly.

"It's all right," I said gently. "Now just tell where you escap—I mean, where you came from, and we'll take care of everything else."

The little man smiled relievedly.

"That's very good of you," he said, "because—"

I cut him off.

"And where are you from?" I prompted gently.

"Oh," he said, "I'm from the Future."

I HAD been prepared for a zany answer, but nothing like this.

"The Future," I gasped.

"It's a gag," Sid Hunt stormed. "A cheap rib on my Follies of the Future. I'll bet Swanson over at the Capitol is behind this. He's boiling because I'm cornering all the business on the Stem."

The little man listened politely to this harangue, but without a flicker of

comprehension in his eyes. Then he turned back to me.

"Since you seem to be most intelligent person here," he smiled. "Perhaps I'd better confine my explanations to you."

Being called intelligent by a fugitive from a strait-jacket is far from my idea of a graceful compliment, but I was too dizzy myself to protest.

"You see," the little nut was saying, "I am from the year, 4230. I was sent back to this era by my wife to do some research for her."

I was fascinated by the little fellow's air of absolute sincerity.

"How interesting," I managed to say.

"I encountered some slight difficulty in arriving here," the screwball went on. "I overshot my mark the first try and landed right in the middle of a battle. One of the soldiers told me it was the American Civil War, so I flashed my wife and she brought me back to this Time."

Sid Hunt's control shattered to bits.

"Throw him out!" he screamed, beside himself. "Throw him out! If he ever sets foot in my theater again . . . Men from the future, civil wars, time machines, it's all Swanson's doings!"

I felt inclined to agree with him, but there was something pathetic in the face the little fellow turned to me.

"Please," he said desperately, "you believe—"

That was as far as he got. The stage hands grabbed him by the arms and hustled him away. I heard a door open, followed by a shrill yelp, then the sound of the door banging shut. Our little chum had departed—swiftly and forcibly.

Sid Hunt was still fuming.

"Civil War," he muttered viciously. "Who're they trying to kid?"

There was no tactful answer for that one, so I kept quiet. We turned and

were heading back for the wings, when I suddenly stopped and grabbed Sid by the arm.

"Hey!" I yelled. "Where's the machine?"

"What machine?" he demanded irritably.

I was staring about dazedly, my eyes popping incredulously.

"The machine the little guy arrived in," I said weakly.

Sid Hunt glared around the emptiness backstage, and then an uneasy look crept into his eyes.

"It's gone," he said blankly.

I grabbed one of the hurrying stagehands.

"Mike," I said, "did you see the machine that dropped onto the stage a few minutes ago?"

"Yeah. I helped shove it off into the wings."

"Well, where is it now?"

He peered about, scratching his head.

"You got me. Last time I saw it, it was settin' right here. That was when Miss Ruby was crawling into it, I believe."

"**R**UBY!" I shouted. "You say Ruby climbed into that thing?"

He looked at me reproachfully.

"You know how she is, Mr. Flannigan," he said defensively. "Like a little kid when there's something new around here. She's always poking into things to see what makes the wheels go 'round. She probably just wanted to look into that contraption. Nothing wrong in that, is there?" he finished truculently.

"I hope not," I said worriedly. For I *was* worried. Something was as screwy as hell. The way the machine had materialized in the first place was odd, and its disappearance now with Ruby probably in it could hardly be considered a normal, prosaic occur-

rence.

"It's some kind of a gag," Sid Hunt said, but his voice lacked conviction. "Where do you suppose she is?"

"I can't even guess," I snapped.

"Ooooh," he moaned. "She's due on in a few more minutes. I can't stand this any longer. Get me a bottle of aspirin and an ice pack."

"I've got something else to get first," I said grimly.

"What?"

"Number 33," I snapped. "He's just goofy enough to know the answers to a lot of questions that are bothering me."

I left Sid Hunt standing there and dashed out through the stage entrance, but a glance told me I was too late. The alley leading to the street was deserted, and when I reached the street itself, I saw nothing but the anonymous stream of humanity that is constantly surging through Manhattan's gulleys.

The old saw about the needle and the haystack applied perfectly. How could I find one individual in this scurrying rush of people? Even though that individual was dressed in a silly costume, and was screwy enough to stand out *anywhere*, the task was a hopelessly impossible one.

I tried asking a few of the pedestrians if they had seen anyone of his description, but after receiving monosyllabic grunts instead of answers, I decided that New Yorkers aren't people after all and cut it out.

There was nothing left but the hit-and-run, free lance method. He couldn't have gone far and there were only a certain number of places he could go, so I set out to try them all.

For an hour I cruised in and out of restaurants, dives, shoe shops, taverns, working steadily uptown.

I guess it was just blind luck that I finally discovered him. As I was leav-

ing a gay night spot known as Danny's Dive, I suddenly spotted his reflection in the bar mirror. He was at a table in the rear of the joint, surrounded by three carmine-lipped blondes.

And I have never seen such an expression of happiness on any human countenance. The little fellow in the bunny suit was apparently in his element. On each knee he was balancing a blonde, and with one hand he was holding a tall glass, and with the other a leg of chicken. One of the girls had perched a silly hat on his head, giving him the look of a court jester at an orgy. He looked quite ridiculous—but quite happy.

I THREADED my way across the postage stamp dance floor, pulled up a chair to his table and sat down.

One of the curvaceous blondes on his knee parted her red lips in a sirrumpy smile.

"Hiya, Big Boy," she cooed.

The little fellow shoved a strand of hair from his eyes and beamed brightly at me.

"Ish wonderful," he said happily. "Real food and drink instead of vitamins. Just can't get over it. And girls, weak little girls who think I'm wonderful. Glorious, marvelous. Can't get over it."

I saw that he was more than just a bit woozy. The table was loaded with toothsome delicacies and a half-dozen bottles of champagne were in the process of being emptied.

He shoved a dish of chopped lobster and terrapin toward me, and then splashed a water glass full of champagne and pointed to it.

"Drink up, drink up," he cried. "It's real, you hear, real."

"Before you get too drunk," I said, "I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes. The machine in which you ar-

rived disappeared after you left the theatre. On top of that one of the stars of the show is missing, and one of the workmen saw her climbing into the machine before it disappeared."

Number 33 shook his head sadly.

"Too bad," he muttered. "Too, too bad."

"What's too bad?" I demanded.

But instead of answering me the little fellow began to laugh uncontrollably. For perhaps a minute he was helpless in the grip of merriment, his eyes streaming with tears. Finally he wiped his eyes and, with an obvious effort, stopped laughing.

"It's so funny," he chuckled, "I just can't help myself. When my wife—" He got not farther than that, when he burst out laughing again, pounding his hand on his thigh in his hilarity.

I was more than a little irked.

"When your wife what?" I asked impatiently.

"When my wife finds another man in the time machine," he gasped, "she'll be fit to be tied."

"It's not a man," I said, "it's a girl."

The little fellow wheeled on me, almost upsetting the trim wench on his knee.

"A girl?" he cried incredulously. For an instant he seemed thunderstruck, then, to my great annoyance, he was off on another laughing jag.

"So much the better," he chortled. "My wife will be absolutely wild."

I was getting tired of this drunken double talk.

"Listen," I snapped, "if you know where the machine and girl have gone, you'd better start singing before I forget the fact that I'm sixty pounds heavier than you."

He turned and regarded me solemnly.

"They're gone," he said. "Gone for good."

"Where?" I barked.

"Into the Future," he answered.

"You're going to go into a nose-dive," I snarled, "if you don't start giving me the straight dope."

"It's the truth," he said, and there *was* an unmistakable ring of sincerity in his voice. "The absolute truth. They've gone into the Future. If the girl was in the time machine when my wife recalled it, then she's certainly in the Future."

He nibbled a piece of lobster moodily and sipped his drink.

"Poor girl," he muttered.

ABOUT me I could hear the clink of glasses and the chatter of voices, and farther away I could hear the faint rumble of Manhattan's traffic. So I wasn't crazy, yet. But the little fellow's horrible calmness and sincerity in discussing the Future as if it were a proper noun, gave me distinct shocks in the cranium.

Maybe I *was* going crazy for I suddenly realized that I was trying to make a case for the guy's attitude. I asked myself: How had the strange machine materialized and disappeared in the theatre? If it was a time machine, that would explain—I decided then I was crazy. Thinking seriously about time machines was proof enough that I would soon be needing keepers with white jackets.

"Look," I said, and my voice was oddly strained, "won't the time—I mean—the machine come back again?"

"Who cares?" ones of the blondes cried tipsily. "Let's have 'nother drink, Ducky."

"What do you want?"

"Champagne," the blonde clip artist pouted.

"Champagne," the little fellow cried to a waiter. "Lots and lots of it."

By way of thanking my Maker for small favors, I was glad as the devil

I didn't have to foot the bill the little guy was running up.

An idea hit me then, an idea that was so simple that I'd completely overlooked it till now. I grabbed the little fellow by the arm.

"If you're from the Future," I said, "and the time machine has gone back without you, how're you going to get there yourself?"

He took his attention from the blonde and blinked at me.

"I'm not," he said. "I'm not going back. In the first place it's impossible and secondly I don't want to."

"Why?" I asked.

He shuddered and gulped a mouthful of champagne.

"The Future," he said, "is Hell! Everything run by women. They don't need us anymore and they know it. Someday they'll exterminate us all. Men are slaves and the women are masters. My wife is a Custodian. Big job. Bosses me around all day, nothing to do at night but take a sleep tablet and forget about it. That's 'nother thing. Pills, pills, pills! Food pills, drink pills, baby pills, rest pills. All a man does in the Future is take pills and orders. Ish terrible!"

He dropped a succulent crumb of terrapin into his mouth and sighed ecstatically.

"I love it here. Food, drink, women! What women! They like me, tell me I'm wonderful, treat me as an equal."

One of the blondes patted him on the cheek fondly.

"Sure you're wonderful, Honey. Let's have just a teeny bit more lobster, huh?"

"Lobster, lots of lobster!" the little fellow cried happily to a passing waiter.

"You see," he said triumphantly, "they do think I'm wonderful. Are all girls of this year like this?"

I looked cynically at the greedy lit-

tle wenches gorging themselves with his food and drink, and scheming behind their doll-like faces how they could clip him for more.

"Fortunately," I said, "No."

If he heard me he didn't get it. He was tickling one of them under the chin and making noises like a grandfather.

I LEANED against the back of my chair feeling savagely ineffectual. I'd never been in such a screwy position in all of my life. I was worried about Ruby, really worried. Yet the only explanation I could get as to her whereabouts was too silly to even consider.

That she had disappeared into the Future was absurd. Then doubts began to hit me. The disappearance of the machine etc. I took a drink and followed it with two more.

The giggles of the girls were growing shriller, and the smile on the little fellow's face was widening joyfully by the second.

"No more pills," he cried happily. "No more orders, no more worry about becoming extinct. Here I have found Paradise beyond dreams. Oh you happy, simple people of the Past, you really live in the fullest sense of the word."

He jerked off the silly hat and waved it in wild circles over his head.

"No more pills," he shouted. "No more pills for ever and ever."

He sounded like an advertisement for More-Bran cereal.

"Let's go somewhere else, Ducky," one of the mascaraed mamas pouted.

"Sure, sure," Number 33 cried magnanimously, "anywhere you say."

Without wasting an instant the three girls scampered off to get their wraps. The tall, dignified waiter stepped up and laid a long piece of cardboard be-

fore my little chum in the green suit.

The little fellow set down his drink and picked up the bill.

He turned it over in his hands and then looked at me, puzzled.

"What do I do with this?" he asked. His voice was as naive as a child's.

"Pay it," I said bluntly. "What do you think?"

"With what?" he asked uncertainly.

I experienced a peculiar sensation in the pit of my stomach.

"Good Lord!" I groaned. "Haven't you any money?"

The waiter's ears pricked up. He leaned forward.

"Any difficulty gentlemen?" His voice was as suave as silk but there was an unpleasant undertone to it.

Number 33 turned to me bewilderedly. I can spot phonies but at moments I'd swear the little fellow was dead on the level when he asked:

"What's money?"

I closed my eyes and counted ten. Then I told him, trying to avoid profanity wherever possible.

When I got through with my brief discourse on elementary economics he was staring at me incredulously.

"You can't be serious," he said, blinking owlishly at me. "It's absolutely unbelievable that intelligent human beings would carry metal and paper around with them to exchange for the necessities of life. It—it's barbaric, that's what it is."

"Barbaric or not," I said, "it's one of the quaint customs of the day. And if you have any ideas about disregarding it, you will soon learn that we have even more barbaric methods to discourage you."

I'd seen the waiter casually raise his hand and nod to two very rough, business-like looking gents who were lounging against a wall watching the crowd.

"You're joking," the little fellow said

flatly.

I glanced up and saw that the bouncers were heading our way.

"I wish I was," I said dismally.

The waiter picked up the check from the table and cleared his throat meaningfully.

"The bill," he said frigidly, "is sixty-eight dollars and fifty cents."

THE little fellow looked so puzzled and dismayed that I almost felt sorry for him. He looked entreatingly at me, as if expecting me to tell him it was all a joke.

The bouncers sauntered close to us and then circled the table slowly like vultures waiting to pounce in for the kill. I glanced up and saw that the three blondes who had glutted themselves with the terrapin and champagne were coming back, coats over their respective arms.

But before they reached the table they stopped. Being experts at appraising such situations they instantly interpreted the scene and realized that their sugar daddy was out of sugar.

For only an instant did they hesitate. Then they turned casually and strolled away.

The little fellow didn't notice and I was glad.

He was too engrossed with the decidedly unfriendly attitude of the waiter and the two bouncers, who had been joined by the manager, a swarthy, stocky fellow in a tight-fitting tuxedo.

"Sixty-eight dollars and fifty cents," the waiter repeated with unpleasant emphasis.

Suddenly off to our right a jingling clatter sounded. Looking up I saw that some lucky guy had hit the coin machine for a few dollars in silver.

The little visitor from the Future heard and saw also.

For a second his face was puzzled

and uncomprehending. Then a broad relieved smile broke over his features.

"I see, I see," he said delightedly. "You keep the money in boxes and then when you need some you just pull a lever. Very nice, very nice indeed."

I tried to explain that things didn't quite work that way, but he would have none of it.

"You can't fool me twice," he said gaily. "You did have me puzzled for a while, but I see how the system works now. I'll go over and get what money we need."

I had the helpless feeling that steals over a man when he attempts to reason with a woman or a copper.

"Go ahead," I said wearily. I slipped him a half a buck and told him how to use it. At least, I figured, it would delay the inevitable reckoning.

The waiter glared at him when he stood up and trotted over to the slot machine, but I guess he realized that since I was still at the table it wasn't an attempt to dodge the check.

So he concentrated his stern, unwelcome attention on me.

"Is there anything else?" he inquired coldly.

"Yes," I snapped, "bring me a glass of water and a tooth pick. The splinterless kind."

The waiter opened his mouth, but whatever he was going to say was drowned out in a sudden whirring clatter that was followed instantly by one of the sweetest sounds in the world—the heavy jingling roar of silver.

I wheeled and saw the little fellow in the bunny suit looking at the slot machine with a pleased smile on his face, and standing knee-deep in a glittering pile of half-dollars.

He had hit the jackpot!

**I** STOOD up, feeling suddenly weak all over, and walked to the slot ma-

chine.

"They all came out," the little green-suited fellow said proudly. Then a remorseful look stole over his face. "There won't be anything left for the next fellow, will there?" he asked guiltily.

"Let's get out of here," I said in a strangled voice. I had stood about all I could.

The waiter was gathering up the coins, his unpleasantness having faded like a dew drop in the sun. He was again thinking of his tip.

"Put back what you don't need," the little fellow directed him. "I wouldn't want to inconvenience the next person who came along."

He was quite happy as he trotted alongside me to the door.

"Quite an ingenious system, I must say," he remarked. "Just pull a lever and that's that. Very ingenious."

I groaned. Why did everything happen to me? I thought disgustedly. Ruby vanished without a trace, and me saddled with a nut from the Future who was convinced that he was in Paradise, when he was actually in New York.

It was probably because I was so absorbed with these distracting thoughts that I didn't notice the sleek black car pull up to the curb alongside us. The first inkling I had of trouble's ugly head was in the form of a sudden hard jab in the back.

I froze in my tracks. A voice said in my ear:

"Smart guy. In the car now and no tricks."

There was nothing else to do. I stepped for the open door of the car, but just then there was an interruption.

"Where are you going?" my chum from the Future asked plaintively.

"Probably for a ride," I answered grimly—and truthfully

"How delightful," he answered,

pleased. "You think of everything here, don't you?"

I turned my head slightly and saw that the mug behind me was Dapper Dan, Scarlotti's finger man. The mug I'd thrown out of the theatre not two hours before.

"Hello Danny," I grinned. "Playing tough guy now?"

He glared at me. "Who's the mug in the clown suit?" he grated.

"Friend of mine," I said, trying to give the little runt the office to scam. But he stood there smiling, obviously pleased with the prospects of a ride.

"Get in!" Dapper Dan snapped at him.

"Thank you," he answered jubilantly. He climbed awkwardly into the car. I got in after him cursing fluently. Then the car moved away from the curb in a swift rush of power.

"Wonderful," squealed Boy Scout Suit, "wonderful!"

The car flashed through the heavy night traffic and in a few minutes was crawling over the Washington bridge to Jersey.

Beside Dapper Dan, who was seated next to me prodding a persuader into my ribs, there were two other yeggs in the car, both in the front seat.

The trip was made in ominous silence. The only person who was unaffected by the situation was the visitor from a couple of thousand years from now.

He was so immensely excited by the spectacle of Manhattan's sky line that he forgot to jabber questions into my ear. He contented himself with squirming about, and sighing happily at the sights that spread around him.

I was so curious about him that I actually was able to forget my own predicament. If he was faking astonishment and excitement he was doing a remarkably fine job of it. If he *wasn't*

faking he belonged to another time era, that was certain.

THE silence held until we reached a shack in Jersey set back from the street, then Dapper Dan nudged me with the gun and told me to get out.

As we filed into the dark house, I did a little worrying in behalf of myself. Things seemed to be getting worse and worse for me. Still no inkling as to where Ruby had disappeared, except the assumption that she had been snatched into a future time. But that was not the immediate problem. More pressing than that, was what Dapper Dan and his playmates had in store for me.

A light flicked on and I saw we stood in a sparsely furnished room with all the blinds drawn. It was a deserted neighborhood, I had noticed as we entered.

"Nice place for a murder," I remarked conversationally.

"Maybe," Dapper Dan commented casually.

The other two thugs seated themselves without taking their eyes off me. My playmate from the Future stared curiously about the ill-furnished room. His features were pleasantly but uncertainly expectant; as if he were a spectator at a peculiar game which he did not understand too well.

Dapper Dan broke the short silence.

"You held the cards a while ago," he said softly, "when you tossed me out of your show. The situation is reversed now. And what happens to you depends on how anxious you are to cooperate."

"Meaning what?" I asked.

"That Scarlotti intends to muscle into the show business of New York. He's going to do it on the legit. And he thinks you'd be a good man to have working for him. It isn't everyone that



the Boss is willing to take in, you know."

"He's taken in everybody he's done business with," I said recklessly.

"Very funny," Dapper Dan said tonelessly. "I may have to ask the boys here to show you their appreciation of your wit if you keep it up. Now, for the last time, are you in?"

I pretended to ponder the situation.

"You know," I said thoughtfully, "I think I've got a good play for Scarlotti to lead off with."

"What's that?" Dapper Dan asked.

"It's a play," I said, "that symbolizes Scarlotti and his whole outfit pretty well. It's called *Brother Rat!*"

Dapper Dan's face flushed purple. His hand came out of his coat pocket holding a gun.

"You're a little too wise, I think," he said softly.

The little man from Tomorrow jumped excitedly when he saw the gun in Dapper Dan's hand.

"I know what that is," he cried, "it's a gun. I saw one in the Collectarium once. The inscription said it was a weapon used by the cliff dwellers of the twentieth century."

Dapper Dan's jaw dropped a full inch.

"Who is this guy?" he demanded.

"Is he a screwball?"

"Use it, please," the little fellow begged. "I'd love to see it work. Please try it."

"I think I will," Dapper Dan said softly.

He swung the muzzle around until it aimed squarely at the third clasp of the little fellow's uniform.

"You'll know better than to try and kid me the next time," he said viciously. His finger tightened slowly on the trigger.

I'd swear the little fellow didn't know he was staring straight into eternity.

The smile was still on his face and his eyes were bright with interest.

I couldn't let him go that way. If I did I knew I'd see his friendly, innocent face before me the rest of my life.

Just as Dapper Dan's finger closed on the trigger, I hurled myself at him. My shoulder drove into his side, and at the same instant I heard a thundering report above my head and felt a hot slash of flame sear across my neck.

**B**UT that wasn't all. As I crashed to my knees I felt, rather than saw, a shimmering phosphorescence illuminate the room with crazy flashing lights. Then a sound like the ripping of a delicate fabric filled the room and a second later a thunderous blast jarred the very floor beneath me.

Dazed, I looked up. The sight before me caused me to blink rapidly and unbelievably.

For before my astounded eyes, smack in the middle of the room, was a huge undulating ball of metal. Before I could collect my badly scattered wits, the hatch-like cover on the machine was flung back and a slim, auburn-headed figure slipped out and dropped to the floor.

"*Ruby!*" I yelled.

"Well of all people," she exclaimed.

"Whatever are you doing here?"

That was all the opportunity we had for light conversation.

For Dapper Dan had picked himself from the floor, and now he shoved the muzzle of his gun into my back and barked at his thugs.

"Grab the doll!"

They wasted no time. Struggling and twisting she was hauled to one side of the room, where she proceeded to give every member of the opposition her exact views on their ancestry and upbringing.

I knew it was all over then. Some-

how Ruby had been returned, and now I had no doubts as to where she'd been. But she had returned just in time to stick her pretty neck into a tight noose of trouble.

No one had paid any attention to the little fellow, and I peered around to see what had happened to him. My first thought was that he had collected a bit of lead for himself, but I saw immediately that I was mistaken. He was cowering in a corner, a mask of terror stamped on his face. I felt a twinge of pity. It must have been an unnerving situation for him.

But I saw then that he didn't seem to be worrying about the gangsters. His eyes were focused on the time machine and one trembling hand was pointing at it in horror. He was almost blubbing in his trepidation, but I did manage to catch one frightened word.

"My ww-wife," he gasped. "My w--wife!"

I wheeled and saw that another person was emerging from the time machine.

But what a person!

She was a female. That much was obvious. But from there on all resemblance to the females I've met ended. As she dropped to the floor I saw that she was as tall as I, and I'm no pigmy.

Her eyes were flashing pools of authority and power, and her features were cast in the same noble lines as those of our North American Indians. Straight, tawny hair fell to her wide, splendidly muscled shoulders. A brilliant cape swirled about her as she stepped forward. She was the living picture of power and strength and sternness.

She faced the gangsters, hands at her sides, but her wonderful flashing eyes raked them scornfully.

I could hear Dapper Dan breathing hard—and incredulously.

"What's your racket?" he snarled. He moved the gun to cover the Amazonian creature. "I got you covered," he snapped.

A crimson flash of anger appeared in the woman's face.

"Put that toy away," she thundered. "How dare you threaten me! You insolent, miserable slave."

The power in her voice would have taxed the dynamos at Coulee dam.

THE only sound in the room was Dapper Dan's harsh breathing and then to my utter amazement, the gun slipped from his hand and banged on the floor.

"You're running the show," he panted. "Anything you say."

Without a word the gloriously impressive creature pressed two buttons on her wide belt. With a faint *hiss!* three brilliant streaks of light crackled out and seemed to spear the gangsters in the forehead. The lances of light then seemed to dissolve in the air, and a faint acrid smokiness was the only tangible evidence of their existence.

But Dapper Dan and his chop men were stretched on the floor, apparently as lifeless as a Hollywood 'B' picture.

"Isn't she wonderful!" Ruby exclaimed excitedly.

"Bosh!" snorted the impressive female. She marched across the room and jerked her husband to his feet. For an instant I thought she might tear one of his arms off and beat him over the head with it, but fortunately for Number 33 something distracted her attention.

Her eyes focused incredulously on the silly, feminine hat which was still perched on the little fellow's head. It was ridiculous enough to distract anyone's attention.

"Where did you get that?" she thundered.

He stared at her in blank terror, and then following the direction of her stern eyes, his hand moved guiltily to the hat.

"Well?" she demanded. "What is it? Just because you were a few thousand years away from me you evidently decided to make a perfect fool of yourself."

I believe I felt sorrier for the little fellow right then than I had at any of his misadventures in this country. Making excuses to a wife—any wife—is no snap. But to be called upon to lie glibly to a super amazon such as this would be almost too much to expect of any man. Even Superman would have quailed.

"It—it's a hat," the little fellow said, swallowing weakly.

"Hmmp!" his wife's snort was derisive and unmollified.

"I—I got it for you," he said desperately, the words tumbling hurriedly from his mouth. "Here, put it on."

I shuddered as he reached out suddenly and stuck the absurd hat awkwardly on her head.

"There," he said faintly.

The amazonian creature drew a slow breath into her massive lungs. Her cheeks reddened and her eyes flashed dangerously. I backed away like a craven. She looked as if she were ready to explode—both figuratively and literally.

But then Ruby, with what seemed to me a display of idiotic bravery, grabbed her impulsively by the arm and turned her about.

"Not that way," she cried in horrified tones. "You don't wear them straight. You tip them on the side and wear them over one eye."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Superwoman.

"The hat, silly," Ruby said briskly. "It looks simply awful."

She stepped back chin in hand, and

studied the massive creature before her.

"Sit down." she commanded suddenly. In her eyes was the gleaming light of a missionary. She flew out of the room then, and returned a second later with two objects in her hand.

"Look!" she gloated. "I found a compact and a bottle of perfume in the bedroom."

Number 33's wife was still standing dazedly in the center of the room, but when Ruby bustled up to her she sat down meekly, a strange bewildered look on her face.

LIKE an enthusiastic artist Ruby wielded the lipstick and powder, until the stern, plain features began to glow and soften under the sorcery of make-up.

Then she fluffed up the straight, tawny hair until it bore a reasonable facsimilitude to the modern mode.

On top of a swirling wave of hair she placed the silly little hat and with a few deft motions shoved it down into place—over one eye.

Then she stepped back and viewed her handiwork delightedly.

"You're perfectly scrumptious," she decided definitely. "There is just one thing lacking though."

She removed the stopper from the perfume bottle and sprinkled a few drops of the scented liquid in the newly coiffed hair.

"Now," she cried, standing back again, "you're absolutely perfect!"

"Very nice," I commented cautiously.

Something very peculiar was happening to the stern, powerful creature. She looked uncertainly at us as if wondering whether to believe us or not. Perhaps it was the make-up but she certainly seemed to be, somehow, more of a woman than before.

"See for yourself," Ruby said, holding the compact mirror before her.

For a long moment the female gladiator regarded her image, a curious expression on her face. Then she turned, somewhat shyly I thought, to her husband who had hardly taken a breath for the past five minutes. An unspoken question was in her eyes.

Number 33, the little guy in the boy scout suit, was more than equal to the situation.

"You're absolutely beautiful," he said dramatically.

I felt proud of him. He even put a hand to his heart as he spoke. He had learned something of flattery from his experience at Danny's Dive.

And flattery was one weapon which his statuesque wife had no defense against.

It would be incorrect to say she simpered. But she came as close to it as anyone of her size and majestic bearing could. A faint blush stained her cheeks and her eyelids fluttered coyly.

"I probably look simply awful," she said, as women since Eve have had a habit of saying.

Number 33 assured her stoutly that her appearance left nothing to be desired, and she giggled. Actually, I knew the war was over then.

It turned out I was right. When they climbed into the time machine a few minutes later she was calling him "Ducky" and he was calling her "Toots."

The little fellow shook hands with me before they left.

"You've got a wonderful set-up here," he said wistfully. Then he brightened. "But I'm going to have a new deal in the Future that won't be bad."

As he closed the hatch and settled himself happily on his wife's knee for the return trip I found myself agreeing with him. At least I hoped he would—I mean *will*—be happy.

When they had gone I turned to Ruby:

"Ruby," said I firmly, "we are going to get married. At once."

"But I can't" she wailed, "I've so many things to do, people to invite and—"

"It will," I continued inexorably, "be a simple ceremony and it will take place as soon as we find a justice of the peace. Women may rule the Future but, by Heaven, I'm giving the orders now."

"Whatever you say," she said meekly. But she sighed softly and fluttered her eyelids.

We were married last week at the Little Church Around The Corner before three thousand people after an engagement of three months and are now living happily ever after.

All you have to do is put your foot down.

You see?

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# THE OBSERVATORY by THE Editor

(Concluded from page 7)

THE sinking of the *Reuben James* brings to mind William P. McGivern's recent story "Convoy To Atlantis". The only difference is that Bill called his ship the *Vulcan*. So far, the story has been fulfilled to an amazing extent by fact. The next prediction, made in a footnote of that story, is Hitler's drive on and capture of Iran. Let's see now just how prophetic McGivern really was. And if it's true that he really has a time machine too! All our authors are building them, they claim.

MAX KARANT, who is managing editor of our companion magazine *Flying & Popular Aviation*, suggests that we do a super air-war story, showing the future of fighting aviation, which today looms so big in public consciousness. How about it, readers? Would you like to have this expert on aviation supervise a super story written by one of our leading writers, prophesying the future of armed aviation? He has some tremendous things to say about the future—things that can only be safely said in fiction. But in *AMAZING STORIES* it's fiction that comes true!

NEXT month, at long last, comes the first instalment of Don Wilcox's magnificent two-part serial, "Disciples of Destiny". We think you'll agree, when you've read it, that the novel length field in science fiction has a new master. It's a powerful story with an amazing scope and concept of those unknown things that lie behind all science, and all humanity, and all wars. It is a story that will make you gasp.

ROBERT FUQUA does the cover for the story, and a finer painting couldn't have been painted for that particular story. It depicts the weird mystery of the story in a graphic manner that will keep you looking at the painting for many long minutes, we feel sure.

SOME old proverb says that it takes a big man to laugh at himself. Well, we don't claim to be big, but we are allowing the readers to take a laugh at us next issue. We do it via Edmond Hamilton's unusual little satirical piece, "Wacky World". If you take science fiction, and yourself, very seriously, better skip this one. It'll sort of kick you in the seat of the pants, and the kicker will laugh uproariously at your discomfort. Your editor got kicked plenty when he first read the manuscript. Hamilton, you dog! We'll get even with you someday!

THEN, following up the first of the Burroughs Pellucidar stories swiftly, we'll have number two of the series. No need to mention more.

AND Raymond Z. Gallun appears with "Sarker's Joke Box", an odd little tale such as only he can write. Which, added to Manly Wade Wellman's "Suicide Rocket" seems to indicate that we have two very good old timers back again with something quite special. Welcome back, boys!

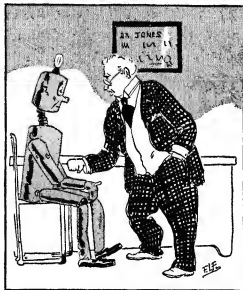
DON HARGREAVES also appears once more, fresh from Festus Pragnell's war-torn London. This time it's quite a breezy yarn, and we wonder how he can write like that with bombs whizzing down. Wacky guy, that Hargreaves!

FOR our back cover, we'll have artist Frank R. Paul's "City On Earth As Martians Might Visualize It." You'll get a wallop out of this one. It'll make you wonder how wrong we are about Mars, and all the rest of 'em.

WHICH is enough to reveal about our March issue. We don't want to spoil all the surprises, and we think there'll be a few more.

A PEEK into the distant future reveals one or two tidbits in sight. Nelson S. Bond's new novel, "Gods Of The Jungle". We have the first half of it on our desk now, and we've read it through with breathless interest. It easily compares with his best work. Then there's David Wright O'Brien's novelette based on Cupid, of all persons!

Which brings us to the end for this month. Now, if only the publishers don't notice!—Rap



"I'm afraid that all we can do is melt you down and start all over again!"

# The Return to



# Pellucidar

By  
EDGAR RICE  
BURROUGHS

***The earth was hollow, and inside it David Innes and  
Abner Perry found a strange, savage civilization!***

DAVE INNES came back to Sari. He may have been gone a week, or he may have been gone for years. It was still noon. But Perry had completed his aeroplane. He was very proud of it. He could scarcely wait to show it to Dave Innes.

"Does it fly?" asked Innes.

"Of course it flies," snapped Perry. "What good would an aeroplane be which did not fly."

"None," replied Innes. "Have you flown it yet?"

"No, of course not. The day of the first flight is going to be epochal in the annals of Pellucidar. Do you think

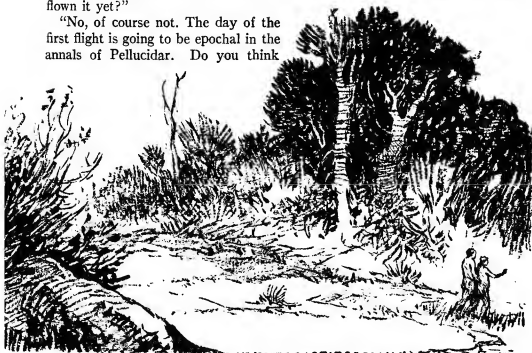
I'd fly it without you being here to see?"

"That's mighty nice of you, Abner; and I appreciate it. When are you going to fly it?"

"Right now; right now. Come and see it."

"Just what do you propose using an aeroplane for?" asked Innes.

"To drop bombs, of course. Just think of the havoc it will raise! Think of these poor people who have never seen an aeroplane before running out



They walked on, oblivious of the creatures lurking behind them

from their caves as it circles overhead. Think of the vast stride it will be in civilizing these people! Why, we should be able to wipe out a village with a few bombs."

"When I went back to the outer crust after the Great War that ended in 1918," said Innes, "I heard a lot about the use of aeroplanes in war; but I also heard about a weapon which causes far more suffering and death than bombs."

"What was that?" demanded Perry, eagerly.

"Poison gas," said Innes.

"Ah, well," said Perry, "perhaps I shall put my mind to that later."

\*Some of you oldsters who can still remember the history you learned many years ago will recall that Pellucidar was discovered in January, 1913, by David Innes and Abner Perry, a discovery which was quite as accidental as was Columbus' discovery of America some four hundred twenty years previously, but none the less epochal.

Columbus started out for India and discovered a new world. Dave Innes and Abner Perry started out to prospect for coal in an invention of Perry's which they called an Iron Mole, and they discovered a new world—at the center of the Earth.

Columbus never really got to America; but Innes and Perry got to Pellucidar, and they are still there. They found it inhabited by beasts long extinct upon the outer crust, by men still in the Stone Age of evolution, and by strange forms of life which had developed along very different lines from similar species in the outside world.

They have made it their life work to bring civilization to the poor, benighted humans of Pellucidar; at least Perry has. Perry was an old man when he came to Pellucidar, an old scientist—a sweet and lovable character. He has done the best he could to bring the blessings of civilization to the Pellucidarians. He found them killing one another with stone hatchets, stone tipped spears, and a few bows and arrows. He gave them gun powder. He built a navy and armed it with cannon.

For you who may have forgotten, may I remind you that there is no such thing as Time in Pellucidar. A stationary sun hangs perpetually at zenith. It is always noon, and one of the psychological effects of this is most weird. As I write this, Dave Innes and Abner Perry have been in Pellucidar for twenty-seven years; yet they are no older than when they left the outer crust! At least, they look and feel no older. Where there is no way of measuring time, there

Dave Innes grinned. He knew that there was not a kinder hearted person living than Abner Perry. He knew that Perry's plans for slaughter were purely academic. Perry was a theoretician, pure and simple. "All right," he said, "let's have a look at your plane."

Perry led him to a small hangar—a strange anachronism in stone-age Pellucidar. "There!" he said, with pride. "There she is; the first aeroplane to fly the skies of Pellucidar."\*

"Is that an aeroplane?" demanded Innes. "It certainly doesn't look like one."

can be no passage of time. When Pellucidarians are tired, they crawl into a dark cave and sleep; when they are hungry, they eat. An hour, a day, a month, or a year may have passed on the outer crust where all men are the slaves of Time; but in Pellucidar it is still noon just as it was when they started doing whatever they may have been doing; therefore, they are no older, not even by a second. This, I think you will agree, is quite sound reasoning. Suppose you started to build a house at noon on a certain day and finished it at noon on the same day—you wouldn't be any older, would you? And it is always the same day in Pellucidar. It always has been.

Another unique characteristic of Pellucidar is that it is horizonless. Wherever you may be standing on the surface of Pellucidar there is no horizon. You are standing on the inside surface of a sphere. The ground rises gently all around you, the view fading away gradually in the distance, limited only by the power of your vision. Always the sun is directly above you and your shadow directly beneath you.

When Dave Innes left Sari to go in search of von Horst, Perry was toying with the idea of an aeroplane. Now, Abner Perry is a scientist. He knows a great deal about a great many things; he knows a little about a great many other things, and he knows nothing about a considerable number of things. On the outer crust he was, by choice, a metallurgical engineer. He was never an aeronautical engineer; but, being Perry, he *would* build an aeroplane. As you may recall, one of his first inventions after he reached Pellucidar was gun powder. What he achieved looked like gun powder, smelled like gun powder, and tasted like gun powder. All that was wrong with it was that it wouldn't burn. Dave Innes suggested that they might use it as a fire extinguisher. That hurt Perry. Of course, he succeeded in manufacturing gun powder later by the well known system of trial and error.—E.R.B.



"That is because it utilizes some entirely new principles," explained Perry.

"It looks more like a parachute with a motor and a cockpit on top of it."

"Exactly!" said Perry. "You grasped the idea instantly—yet there is more to it than the eye perceives. You see one of the dangers of flying is, naturally, that of falling; now, by designing a plane on the principles of a parachute, I have greatly minimized that danger."

"But what keeps it up in the air at all? What gets it up?"

"Beneath the plane is a blower, operated by the engine. This blows a strong current of air constantly straight up from beneath the 'wing'; and, of course, the air flow while the ship is in motion supports it as is true in other, less advanced, designs; while the blower assists it in quickly attaining altitude."

"Are you going to try to go up in that thing?" demanded Innes.

"Why, no; I have been saving that honor for you. Think of it! The first man to have flown in the heavens of Pellucidar. You should be grateful to me, David."

Dave Innes had to smile; Perry was so naive about the whole thing. "Well," he said, "I don't want to disappoint you, Abner; and so I'll give the thing a trial—just to prove to you that it won't fly."

"You'll be surprised," said Perry. "It will soar aloft like a lark on the wing."

A CONSIDERABLE number of Sarians had gathered to inspect the plane and witness the flight. They were all skeptical, but not for the same reasons that David Innes was skeptical. They knew nothing about aeronautics, but they knew that man could not fly. Dian the Beautiful was among them. She is Dave Innes's mate.

"Do you think it will fly?" she asked Innes.

"No."

"Then why risk your life?"

"If it doesn't fly, there will be no risk; and it will please Abner if I try," he replied.

"There will be no honor," she said, "for it will not be the first aeroplane to fly over Pellucidar. The great ship that you called a dirigible brought a plane. Was it not Jason Gridley who flew it until it was brought down by a thipdar?"

They were walking around the plane examining it carefully. The frame of the single parachute-like wing was of bamboo; the "fabric" was fabricated of the peritoneum of a large dinosaur. It was a thin, transparent membrane well suited to the purpose. The cockpit was set down into the top of the wing; the motor stuck out in front like a sore thumb; and behind, a long tail seemed to have been designed to counterbalance the weight of the engine. It carried the stabilizers, fin, rudder, and elevators.

The engine, the first gas engine built in Pellucidar, was an achievement of the first magnitude. It had been built practically by hand by men of the stone age, under the direction of Perry, and without precision instruments.

"Will it run?" asked Innes.

"Of course it will run," replied Perry. "It is, I will concede, a trifle noisy; and is susceptible to some refinements, but a sweet thing nevertheless."

"I hope so," said Innes.

"Are you ready, David?" asked the inventor.

"Quite," replied Innes.

"Then climb into the cockpit and I'll explain the controls to you. You will find everything very simple."

Ten minutes later Innes said he knew all about flying the ship that he would

ever know, and Perry climbed down to the ground.

"Everybody get out of the way!" he shouted. "You are about to witness the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Pellucidar."

A mechanic took his place at the propellor. It was so far off the ground that he had to stand on a specially constructed ladder. A man on either side stood ready to pull the blocks from beneath the wheels.

"Contact!" shouted Perry.

"Contact!" replied Innes.

The man at the propellor gave it a turn. The engine spluttered and died. "By golly!" exclaimed Innes. "It really fired. Try it again."

"Give her more throttle," said Perry.

The mechanic spun her again, and this time the engine took hold. The mechanic leaped from the ladder and dragged it away. David opened the throttle a little wider, and the engine almost leaped from its seat. It sounded as though a hundred men were building a hundred boilers simultaneously.

David shouted to the two men to pull the blocks, but no one could hear him above the din of the motor. He waved and pointed and signalled, and finally Perry grasped what he wanted and had the blocks withdrawn. Everyone stood in wide-eyed silence as David opened the throttle wider. The engine raced. *The plane moved!* But it moved backward! It swung around and nearly crashed into the crowd of Sarians before Innes could cut the motor.

PERRY approached, scratching his head. "What in the world did you do, David," he asked, "to make an aeroplane back up?"

Dave Innes laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Perry. "Don't you realize that we may have stumbled upon something

sensational in aerodynamics? Just think of a fighter plane that could go either forward or backward! Just think of how it could dodge enemy planes! Think of its maneuverability! What *did* you do, David?"

"The honor is wholly yours, Abner," replied Innes. "You did it."

"But how did I do it?"

"You've reversed the pitch of your propellor blades. The plane cannot go in any other direction than backward."

"Oh," said Perry, weakly.

"But it does move," said Innes, encouragingly, "and the fault is easily remedied."

There being no such thing as time in Pellucidar, no one cared how long it took to effect a change in the propellor. Everyone except Perry and a couple of his mechanics lay down in the shade, under trees or under the plane until Perry announced that the propellor had been reversed.

Innes took his place in the cockpit, a mechanic spun the prop, the engine started, the blocks were yanked away. The engine roared and pounded and leaped. The plane almost jumped from the ground in harmony with the vibration. Innes was thrown about so violently in the cockpit that he could scarcely find the controls or keep his hands and feet on them.

Suddenly the plane started forward. It gained momentum. It rushed down the long, level stretch that Perry had selected on which to build his hangar. Innes struggled with the controls, but the thing wouldn't rise. It bounced about like a ship in a heavy sea until Innes was dizzy; and then, suddenly, the fabric burst into flame.

Dave Innes discovered the flames as he was nearing the end of the runway. He shut off the motor, applied the brakes, and jumped. A moment later the gas tank burst, and Abner Perry's

latest invention went up in smoke.

## II

**E**VEN though Abner Perry's first gun powder would not burn, his aeroplane would not leave the ground, and his first ship turned bottomside up when it was launched, nevertheless he had achieved a great deal since Fate and the Iron Mole had deposited him at the center of the Earth.

He had discovered ores and smelted them; he had manufactured steel; he had made cement and produced a very good grade of concrete. He had discovered oil in Sari and refined it to produce gasoline; he had manufactured small arms and cannon. He had found and mined gold, silver, platinum, lead, and other metals. He was probably the busiest man in a whole world and the most useful. The great trouble was that the men of the stone age, or at least most of them, were not far enough advanced to appreciate what Perry had done and could do for them.

Often, warriors armed with his rifles would throw them away in battle and go after the enemy with stone hatchets, or they would seize them by the muzzles and use them as clubs. He built a pumping plant near the village of Sari and pumped water through concrete pipes right into the village, yet many of the women still insisted upon walking half a mile to the spring and carrying water back in gourds balanced on the tops of their heads. Time meant nothing to them and carrying water on their heads gave them a fine carriage.

But Perry kept on just the same. He was never discouraged. He was almost perpetually good natured; and when he wasn't praying, he was swearing like a trooper. Dave Innes loved him, and so did Dian the Beautiful One and Ghak the Hairy One, who was King

of Sari. In fact everyone who knew Abner Perry loved him. The young Sarians who worked for him looked up to him and worshipped him as though he were a god. And Abner Perry was very happy.

After the aeroplane failed, he started in on another invention that he had had in mind for some time. If he had known what was to come of it, he would probably have thrown away all his plans; but of course he could not know.

**D**AVE INNES took a company of warriors and went on a tour of inspection of some of the other kingdoms of the loose confederation which constitutes the Empire of Pellucidar, of which he had been elected Emperor, following the incident of the aeroplane. He went first to Amoz, which is two hundred miles northeast of Sari on the Lural Az, a great uncharted, unexplored ocean. Six hundred miles northeast of Amoz lies Kali. Kali is the last of the kingdoms in this direction which still gives allegiance to the Empire. Suvi, four hundred miles westerly from Kali, dropped out of the confederation and made war upon Kali. The king of Suvi, whose name is Fash, had once held Dian the Beautiful prisoner; and that act had never been avenged.

Dave Innes had this in mind when he went North. It would be well to teach Fash a lesson and, perhaps, place on the throne of Suvi a man loyal to the Empire.

Sari is not on the sea coast; so the party marched to Greenwich, a hundred and fifty miles, and there took one of the ships of the Navy, which had been built under Perry's direction. Greenwich was established and named by Dave Innes and Abner Perry. Through it passes the prime meridian of Pellucidar, also an invention of Innes and Perry.

From Greenwich, they sailed to Amoz in the EPS *Sari*. The EPS is a conceit of Perry's. It means Empire of Pellucidar Ship, like USS *California*. The *Sari*, like most of the ships of Pellucidar, was manned by red skinned Mezops from the Island of Anoroc, a seafaring race of fighting men. They had known only canoes until Perry and Innes introduced them to sails, but they soon mastered the new ships and learned what little of navigation Dave Innes could teach them—all dead reckoning, with only crude compasses to aid them.

Beneath a stationary sun, without the aid of stars or moon, there can be few navigational aids. The Mezops knew all there was to know about tides and currents in the coastal waters near their island. Innes and Perry gave them the compass, the log, and a chronometer which was never accurate and which could never be corrected; so it was seldom used. Their navigation was mostly b'guess and b'God, but they got places. They could always sail the most direct course toward home because of the marvellous homing sense which is common to all Pellucidarians, a Providential compensation for their lack of guiding celestial bodies.

**K**ANDER is King of Amoz. The title, like that of Emperor, was Perry's idea. Kandar, like the other kings of the confederation, is chief of a tribe of cave men. He is about as far advanced in the scale of evolution and civilization as the Cro-Magnons of the outer crust were in their time; but, like the Cro-Magnons, he is intelligent.

From him Innes learned that Fash was warring with Kali again and had boasted that he would move on down south and conquer Amoz and Sari, making himself Emperor of Pellucidar. Now Innes had brought but fifty war-

riors with him, but he decided to go on to Kali and learn first hand what was happening there. First he sent a runner back to Sari with a verbal message instructing Ghak to gather the fleet at Amoz and proceed to Kali with as many warriors as the ships would accommodate; then he got a detail of fifty warriors from Kander and sailed north for Kali, the hundred warriors straining the capacity of the EPS *Sari*.

Six hundred miles by water brought the *Sari* opposite Kali, which lies some forty miles inland; and from here he dispatched a runner to Oose,\* King of Kali. The runner was Hodon the Fleet One, a Sarian warrior of proven courage and loyalty; and it requires courage to carry a message across savage Pellucidar. Fierce beasts and fiercer reptiles are a constant menace, and hostile tribes may lie in ambush along the way.

All the forty miles to Kali, Hodon had good fortune with him. Once he met a tarag, the giant sabertooth tiger; and the beast charged him, but an experienced runner knows how best to safeguard himself. He does not run in a straight line across open plains, but from tree to tree, much after the manner of a merchant ship zigzagging to elude a submarine.

The sabertooth, which is a confirmed maneater, may be aware of this strategy from much hunting of men; but, be that as it may, this particular beast timed its charge to a nicety and launched it at the moment that Hodon was farthest from any tree.

It was a thrilling race—for Hodon a race with Death; for few men have met and killed a tarag singlehanded. An occasional super-warrior may boast that he has done so with the long, stout spear which they usually carry; but Hodon, running light, carried no spear.

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\*Pronounced ô-ză'.—Ed.

He had only his speed upon which he might depend for his life, his speed and a stone knife.

The tarag covered the ground in great, bounding leaps which would quickly have overhauled an ordinary man; but Hodon is no ordinary man. He has not won the distinction of having Fleet One added to his name for nothing. And now he really ran.

The great beast was but a few yards behind him when Hodon sprang into the tree that was his goal and scrambled out of harm's way; then he sat upon a branch and spit down into the face of the tarag and called him all the vile names to which a Pellucidarian can lay his tongue, and they are many.

The tarag wasted no time waiting for Hodon to come down, as experience may have taught him that he would starve to death before any man-thing would come down to be eaten; so he made off in search of other prey.

A little farther on another tree saved Hodon from the talons of a thipdar, a huge pterodactyl such as winged the steaming skies of the Mesozoic. This mighty pteranodon, with a wing spread of twenty feet, hunted high in the air—a preposterous eagle or hawk, ready to swoop down upon any living thing. The only defense against it is the shelter of a tree, and once again Hodon reached this sanctuary just in time.

Hissing with rage, the great reptile soared away; and when it was out of sight Hodon continued on to Kali, which he reached without further adventure.

**T**HE village of Kali consists mostly of caves in a limestone cliff, with a few rude, thatched shelters at its base, which are used for cooking, eating, and communal gatherings.

As Hodon approached the village he was met by a score of warriors, which

was what he might have expected on approaching any well guarded village. They demanded his business there; and when he told them that he bore a message from the Emperor of Pellucidar to Oose, the King of Kali, they looked at one another; and some of them grinned behind his back.

"I will take word to the king," said one. "Wait here."

Presently the man returned and instructed Hodon to follow him, and all the warriors who had come to meet him accompanied them. It might have been a guard of honor, but Hodon had a feeling that it more nearly resembled the guard of a prisoner.

He was conducted to one of the thatched shelters, where a man sat upon a stool, surrounded by other warriors.

"What message do you bring to Oose, King of Kali, from the Emperor of Pellucidar?" demanded the man.

Now, Hodon had never before been to Kali, nor had he ever seen Oose; but it was evident to him that this man was the king. He thought that he was an ill-favored fellow, and he took an instinctive dislike to him.

"You are the king?" he asked, wishing to make sure before he delivered the message. "You are the king of Kali?"

"Yes," replied the man. "I am the king of Kali. What message do you bring?"

"The Emperor wishes you to know that his ship is anchored off the coast of Kali with a hundred warriors. He has heard that you are having trouble with Fash, the king of Suvi; and he wishes to talk the matter over with you, that an expedition may be sent against Fash to punish him for his treason to the Empire. I am to take word back to him as to whether you will come to the coast to talk with him, or if you would prefer that he came here; for

he knows that it is not always easy for a village to feed a hundred extra men."

"I will send a runner to the Emperor," said the king of Kali. "You will remain here and rest."

"My orders are to bring the message to the Emperor myself," replied Hodon.

"I give orders here," said the king; and then he spoke to the leader of the warriors who surrounded Hodon. "Take this man to a high cave and place a guard over him. See that he does not escape."

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded Hodon. "I am a Sarian and one of the Emperor's men. What you are doing is treason."

"Take him away," said the king.

UP rickety wooden ladders Hodon's guard forced him to climb to the highest level. Here a narrow ledge ran in front of several cave mouths. A guard of two warriors already squatted on the ledge near the top of the ladder; two others sat before the mouth of one of the caves. Into this cave Hodon was ordered, and at the same time the king of Kali dispatched a runner to the coast with a message for David Innes.

When Hodon's eyes became accustomed to the darkness of the interior of the cave, he saw that he was not alone. The cave was a large one, and fully fifty men squatted or lay upon the floor.

"Who are you?" demanded one of these, as Hodon groped his way in search of a place to sit down.

"I seem to be a prisoner," replied Hodon.

"We are all prisoners," said the man. "I did not recognize you as you came in. Are you a Kalian?"

"Are you?" asked Hodon.

"We are all Kalians."

"Then why are you prisoners in Kali?" demanded Hodon.

"Because the warriors of Suvi attacked and overcame the village while most of the men were on the hunt and as we returned they fell upon us from ambush, killing many and capturing the rest."

"Then the man sitting in the shelter at the foot of the cliff is not king of Kali?" asked Hodon.

"He calls himself King of Kali, because he has captured the village," replied the man; "but I am king of Kali."

"You are Oose?" demanded Hodon.

"I am Oose, and the man who calls himself King of Kali is Fash, the king of Suvi."

"Then I have given the Emperor's message to the Emperor's enemy," said Hodon, "but how was I to know?"

"The message was for me?" asked Oose.

"For you," said Hodon, and then he repeated the message to Oose.

"It is bad," said Oose, "for now Fash is warned."

"How many warriors has he?" asked Hodon.

"I can count only to ten times the number of my fingers," said Oose. "We men of Kali are not wise like the men of Sari who have been taught many things by Innes and Perry, but if I counted all of my fingers ten times; then I should say that Fash has five times that many warriors."

Hodon shook his head. "I must escape," he said; "for when I do not return after a couple of sleeps, the Emperor will come after me; and he will be outnumbered five to one."

"You cannot escape," said Oose. "Four warriors squat upon the ledge, and many warriors are at the foot of the cliff."

"Are we allowed on the ledge?" asked Hodon.

"If you have a good reason you will be allowed to go to the little cave at

the far end of the ledge."

"I have a good reason," said Hodon, and he went to the mouth of the cave and spoke to one of the warriors on guard there.

The fellow grunted surly permission, and Hodon came out upon the ledge and moved slowly toward the little cave at the far end. He did not look down; but always up, scanning the face of the cliff to its summit, which was only a few feet above his head.

A WARRIOR came to the shore of the Lural Az. He saw a ship anchored in a little cove a short distance off shore, and he shouted until he had attracted attention of those on board. A small boat floated beside the ship, and presently a number of copper colored warriors dove from the deck of the ship and clambered into the small boat, which they paddled toward the shore. When they had come close, they shouted to the warrior and asked him who he was and what he wanted.

"I bring a message from the king of Kali to the Emperor of Pellucidar," the man replied; then the boat was brought to the shore, and the messenger taken aboard. A few moments later he was hauled to the deck of the Sari and brought before David Innes.

"You bring a message from the king of Kali?" asked Innes. "Why did my own warrior not return with it as I ordered?"

"He was ill; and he was very, very tired," replied the messenger. "That there might be no delay, the King sent me."

"What is the message?"

"The King asks that you come to Kali. He cannot leave Kali now because of the danger of attack."

"I understand," said Innes. "I shall come at once."

"I will go ahead and tell the King.

He will be very pleased. Will you come alone?"

"I will bring a hundred warriors with me" replied Innes.

So David Innes started for Kali, and the messenger of Fash went ahead to carry the word to his king.

HODON walked slowly along the ledge, examining every inch of the cliff face above him until he came to the little cave at the far end. Here the cliff dipped downward, and its summit was scarcely four feet above Hodon's head. He turned and looked back along the ledge. One of the guard was watching him; so Hodon stooped and entered the little cave. He turned around immediately, waited a moment, and then looked out. The guard was still looking at him. Hodon retreated into the cave, remained there a short time, and then came boldly out. His heart sank—two members of the guard had their eyes on him. He knew that he must have just a moment while no one was looking in order to put his plan into successful operation. Now there was nothing to do but return to the prison cave.

Here he tried to think of some plan that would help him to carry out that which he had in mind, and finally he hit upon one. He moved over beside Oose, and sat down close to him; then he explained his plan in low whispers.

"We will do it," said Oose; "but do not forget what I told you—you cannot escape."

"I can try," said Hodon.

After a while—whether an hour, a day, or a week of outer Earthly time, who may know?—the guard upon the ledge was changed; then Hodon went immediately to the mouth of the cave and asked permission to go to the small cave at the end of the ledge. Again he was granted permission.

He walked along the ledge slowly.

This time he looked down. At the bottom of the cliff he saw women and children, but only a few warriors—perhaps just enough to guard the village. Where were the others? Hodon thought that he knew, and he chafed to make good his escape. If he did, would he be in time?

Just as he reached the little cave he heard shouts and yells behind him. They were muffled, as though they came from the interior of a cave. He glanced back, and saw the four guards running toward the prison cave. Hodon smiled.

### III

AFTER David Innes left for Kali, Abner Perry busied himself upon a new project. He was determined to have something worth while to show Innes when he returned, for he was still a little depressed over the signal failure of his aeroplane.

He sent hunters out to slay dinosaurs—the largest they could find—with orders to bring back only the peritonea of those they killed; and while they were gone he succeeded in capping a gas well which had been blowing millions of cubic feet of natural gas into the air of Pellucidar for—well, who knows for how long?

He had many women braiding rope, and others weaving a large basket—a basket four feet in diameter and three feet high. It was the largest basket the Sarians had ever seen.

While this work was going on, the messenger arrived from Innes instructing Ghak to set forth with many warriors. When they had departed there were few warriors left, and they had to remain in the village as a guard, except for a couple of hunters sent out daily for fresh meat. The village was full of women; but that did not interfere with Perry's plans, as the warriors had returned with more than enough

peritonea.

The peritonea were stretched and dried and rubbed until they were thoroughly cured; then Perry cut them into strange shapes according to a pattern he had fashioned, and the women sewed them together with very fine stitches and sealed the seams with a cement that Perry thought would not be attacked by the constituents of natural gas.

When this work was completed, Perry attached the great bag to the basket with the ropes the women had braided; and to the bottom of the basket he attached a heavier rope that was five or six hundred feet long. No one in Sari had ever seen a rope like that, but they had long since ceased to marvel much at anything that Perry did.

With little ropes, many little ropes, Perry fastened the basket to the ground by means of pegs driven into the earth all around it; then he ran a clay pipe from the gas well into the opening at the small end of the bag. Perry had given birth to a balloon! To him it was the forerunner of a fleet of mighty dirigibles which could carry tons of high-explosive bombs, and bring civilization to countless underprivileged cliff dwellers.

HODON smiled, just a fleeting little smile that vanished almost as it was born; then he stooped before the little cave at the far end of the ledge and leaped upward. Hodon was proud of his legs; so was all Sari. They were the best legs in the Empire of Pellucidar, so far as anyone knew to the contrary; and they were just as marvelous at jumping as they were at running. They easily carried Hodon upward until his fingers could seize the top of the cliff. It was solid limestone. Hodon had determined that when he first examined the cliff. Had there been top soil right up to the edge of the cliff,



the thing would not have been so easy—it might, in fact, have been impossible of accomplishment; but there was no top soil, and the hard stone did not crumble. It held magnificently, doing its part to thwart the evil machinations of the wicked Fash.

Sometimes we are annoyed by the studied perversities of inanimate objects, like collar buttons and quail on toast; but we must remember that, after all, some of them are the best friends of man. Take the dollar bill, for instance—but why go on? You can think of as many as I can.

So Hodon the Fleet One clambered over the summit of the cliff of Kali, and no man saw him go. When he had come he had carried a stone knife, but they had taken that from him. Now he must go absolutely unarmed across perhaps forty miles of danger ridden terrain, but he was not afraid. Sometimes I think that the men of the old stone age must have been very brave. They must have had to be very brave, as otherwise they could not have survived. The coward might have survived for a while—just long enough for him to starve to death—but it took a brave man to go out and brave the terrific creatures he must have had to face to find food for himself and his family.

Hodon's only thought now was to reach David Innes before he ran into the ambush that he was sure Fash has laid for him. He moved swiftly, but he moved silently. Always every sense was alert for danger. His keen eyes ranged far ahead; his sensitive nostrils picked up every scent borne to them by each vagrant breeze. He was glad that he was running up wind, for now he could be warned of almost any danger that lay ahead.

Suddenly he caught a scent which brought a frown of puzzlement to his the ambush that he was sure Fash had

brow. It told him that there was a woman ahead of him—a lone woman—where there should have been a woman. His judgment told him that there must be at least one man where there was a woman so far from a village, but his nostrils told him that there was no man.

HE kept on in the direction of the woman, for that was the direction in which he was going. Now he went even more warily, if that were possible; and at last he saw her. Her back was toward him. She was moving slowly, looking in all directions. He guessed that she was afraid. She did not know that she was not alone until a hand fell upon her shoulder. She wheeled, a dagger in her hand—a slim dagger laboriously chipped from basalt—and as she wheeled, she struck a vicious blow at Hodon's breast.

Being a Pellucidarian, he had expected something like this; for one does not accost a strange lady with impunity in the stone age. So he was ready. He seized her wrist, and held it. Then she tried to bite him.

Hodon smiled down into her flashing eyes, for she was young and beautiful "Who are you?" he demanded. "What are you doing out here so far from your village alone?"

"That is my business," she said. "Let me go! You cannot keep me, for if you do I'll surely kill you."

"I can't waste time on you," said Hodon, "but you are too young and good looking to be left for the first stray tarag to make a meal of. You may come along with me, if you wish. We have only your dagger, but I'll use it for you."

"Tell me who you are," she said, a trifle more amicably.

"I am Hodon of Sari," he said.

"A Sarian! They are the friends of

my father's people. If you are a Sarian, you will not harm me."

"Who said I would. I *am* a Sarian. Now who are you?"

"I am O-aa,\* the daughter of Oose, King of Kali."

"And you are running away because Fash has conquered your people. Am I right?" He released his hold upon her wrist, and she returned her dagger to its sheath.

"Yes, you are right," she replied. "After Fash had conquered Kali, he took me for himself; but I escaped. It was well for Fash that I did; because I should have killed him. You see, I am the daughter of a king, and my mother was—"

"I have no time to listen to your life history," said Hodon. "Are you coming with me, or not?"

"Where are you going?"

He told her.

"I do not like your manner; and I shall probably not like you," said O-aa, "but I will come with you. You are better than nobody. Being the daughter of a king, I am accustomed to being treated with respect. All of my father's people—"

"Come!" said Hodon. "You talk too much," and he started off again in the direction of the coast.

O-AA trotted along at his side. "I suppose you will delay me," grumbled Hodon.

"I can run as fast and as far as you can. My mother's father was the fastest runner in all his country, and my brother—"

"You are not your mother's father nor are you your brother" said Hodon. "I am only interested in how fast and how far you can run. If you cannot keep up with me, you will be left behind. The fate of the Emperor is

much more important than yours."

"You don't call this running, do you?" demanded O-aa, derisively. "Why, when I was a little girl I used to run down and capture the orthopi. Everyone marveled at my swiftness. Even my mother's father and my brother could not run down and capture the orthopi."

"You are probably lying," said Hodon, increasing his speed.

"For that, my brother will probably kill you," said O-aa. "He is a mighty warrior. He—"

Hodon was running so fast now that O-aa had not the breath for both running and talking, which was what Hodon had hoped for.

G HAK the Hairy One, King of Sari, embarked a thousand warriors on two ships. They were much larger ships than the Sari which was the first successful ship that Perry had built and now practically obsolete. While the Sari had but two guns, one pounders, one in the bow and the other in the stern, the newer ships had eight guns, four on each side on a lower deck; and they fired shells which occasionally burst when they were supposed to, but more often did not burst at all or prematurely. However, the cannon made a most satisfactory racket and emitted vast clouds of black smoke.

When Perry's first one pounder was fired for the first time, the cannon ball rolled out and fell on the ground in front of the cannon. Innes said that this had its advantages, since there would be no waste of ammunition—they could just pick the balls up and use them over again; but Perry's new pieces hurled a shell a full mile. He was very proud of them. The trouble was that the ships never found anyone to shoot at. There was no other known navy in Pellucidar except that of the

\* Pronounced ô-ä'-ä

Korsars, and Korsar is five thousand miles from Sari by water.

As Ghak's expeditionary force beat up the coast toward Kali, David Innes and his hundred warriors marched inland toward the village. Half of Innes's men were armed with the Perry musket, a smooth bore, muzzle loading flintlock; the other half carried bows and arrows. All had knives, and many carried the short spear that all Pellucidarians prefer. It hung by a leather thong about their necks and swung down their backs.

These men were all veterans—the corps elite of the Pellucidarian army. Perry had named them The Imperial Guard, and Innes had succeeded in inculcating some ideas of discipline upon their ruggedly individualistic egos. They marched now in a loose column of fours, and there were an advance guard and flankers. A hundred yards in front of the advance guard three warriors formed the point. Innes was taking no chance on an ambush.

They had covered about half the distance to Kali when the point halted at the summit of a little rise; then one of them turned and raced back toward the main body.

He came directly to Innes. "Many warriors are coming this way," he reported.

Innes disposed his men and advanced slowly. The musketeers were in the first line. As a rule the noise and smoke of one of their ragged volleys would frighten away almost any enemy; which was well; because they seldom hit anybody. After they fired, the archers moved up through their ranks and formed the first line while the musketeers reloaded.

But none of this was necessary now; as a messenger came racing back from the point to say that the force approaching them was friendly—Oose's

warriors coming to welcome them to Kali and escort them to the village.

INNES went forward to investigate personally. At the top of the rise he found a hairy caveman waiting for him. Beyond, he saw a large force of warriors.

"Where is Oose?" he demanded.

"Oose is sick. He has a pain in his belly. He could not come; so he sent me to guide you to Kali."

"Why did he send so many warriors?"

"Because we are at war with Suvi, and Fash's warriors may be nearby."

Innes nodded. The explanation seemed reasonable. "Very well," he said, "lead the way."

His warriors advanced. Soon they were in contact with the warriors of the other party, and these offered them food. They seemed to wish to make friends. They moved among the warriors of The Imperial Guard, handing out food, passing rough jokes. They seemed much interested in the muskets, which they took in their hands and examined interestedly. Soon all the muskets of The Imperial Guard were in the hands of these friendly warriors, and four or five of them surrounded each member of the Guard.

Hodon had taken a short cut. He and O-aa had come over a hill through a forest, and now they halted at the edge of the forest and looked down into the little valley below. In the valley were hundreds of warriors. Hodon's keen eyes picked out David Innes among them; they saw the muskets of the musketeers. Hodon was puzzled. He knew that most of those warriors were the warriors of Fash of Suvi, but there was no battle. The men appeared to be mingling in peace and friendship.

"I cannot understand it" he said. He was thinking out loud.

"I can," said O-aa.

"What do you understand?" asked Hodon. "Tell me in a few words without any genealogical notes."

O-aa bridled. "My brother—" she began.

"Oh, bother your brother!" cried Hodon. "Tell me what you think you understand. You can tell me while we are walking down there to join David Innes."

"You would be fool enough to do that," the girl sneered.

"What do you mean?"

"That is one of Fash's tricks. Wait and see. If you go down, you will soon be back in the prison cave—if they do not kill you instead; which would be good riddance."

SHE had scarcely ceased speaking, when the leader of the friendly warriors voiced a war whoop and, with several of his men, leaped upon David Innes and bore him to the ground. At the signal, the rest of the friendly warriors leaped upon the members of The Imperial Guard whom they had surrounded. There was some resistance, but it was futile. A few men were killed and a number wounded, but the outcome was inevitable. Inside of five minutes the survivors of The Imperial Guard had their hands tied behind their backs.

Then Fash came from behind a bush where he had been hiding and confronted David Innes. "You call yourself Emperor," he said with a sneer. "You would like to be Emperor of all Pellucidar. You are too stupid. It is Fash who should be Emperor."

"You may have something there" said David Innes—"at least for the time being. What do you intend doing with us?"

"Those of your men who will promise to obey me shall live; I will kill the

others."

"For every one of my men you kill, five Suvians shall die."

"You talk big, but you can do nothing. You are through, David Innes. You should have stayed in that other world you are said to have come from. It does not pay to come to Pellucidar and meddle. As for you, I do not know. Perhaps I shall kill you; perhaps I shall hold you and trade you for ships and guns. Now that I am also King of Kali, I can make use of ships with which to conquer the rest of Pellucidar. Now I am Emperor! I shall build a city on the shore of the Lural Az and all Pellucidar shall soon know who is Emperor."

"You have a big mouth," said Innes. "Perhaps you are digging your grave with it."

"I have a big fist, too," growled Fash, and with that, he knocked David Innes down.

At a word from Fash, a couple of warriors yanked Innes to his feet. He stood there, the blood running from his mouth. A shout of anger rose from the men of The Guard.

David Innes looked straight into the shifty eyes of Fash, the king of Sui. "You had better kill me, Fash," he said, "before you unbind my wrists."

Hodon looked on in consternation. There was nothing that he could do. He moved back into the forest, lest some of Fash's warriors see him. Not that they could have caught him, but he did not wish them to know that their act had been witnessed by a friend of David Innes.

"You were right," he said to O-aa. "It was a trick of Fash's."

"I am always right," said O-aa. "It used to make my brother very angry."

"I can well understand that," said Hodon.

"My brother—"

"Yes, yes," said Hodon; "but haven't you any other relatives than a brother and a mother's father?"

"Yes, indeed," cried O-aa. "I have a sister. She is very beautiful. All the women in my mother's family have always been very beautiful. They say my mother's sister was the most beautiful woman in Pellucidar. I look just like her."

"So you have a mother's sister!" exclaimed Hodon. "The family tree is growing. I suppose that will give you something more to talk about."

"That is a peculiar thing about the women of my family," said O-aa; "they seldom talk, but when they do—"

"They never stop," said Hodon, sadly.

"I could talk if I had some one of intelligence to listen to me" said O-aa.

#### IV

THE gas bag of Perry's balloon filled rapidly. It billowed upon the ground and grew larger. It rose above its basket. The eyes of the Sarians grew wide in astonishment. It grew fat stretching its envelope. It tugged at the guy ropes.

Perry shut off the gas. There were tears on the old man's cheeks as he stood there fondling the great thing with his eyes.

"It is a success!" he murmured. "The very first time it is a success."

Dian the Beautiful came and slipped her arm through his. "It is wonderful, Abner," she said; "but what is it for?"

"It is a balloon, my dear," explained Perry. "It will take people up into the air."

"What for?" asked Dian the Beautiful.

Perry cleared his throat. "Well, my dear, for many reasons."

"Yes?" inquired Dian. "What, for instance?"

"Come, come," said Perry; "you wouldn't understand."

"How could they get down again?" she asked.

"You see that big rope? It is attached to the bottom of the basket. The other end of the rope passes around the drum of this windlass we have built. After the balloon has ascended as high as we wish it to we turn the windlass and pull it down."

"Why would anyone wish to go up there?" asked Dian. "There is nothing up there but air and we have plenty of air down here."

"Just think of all the country you could see from way up there," said Perry. "You could see all the way to the Lural Az. With my binoculars, you might see all the way to Amoz."

"Could I see David, if he were coming back?"

"You could see his ships on the Lural Az a long way off," said Perry, "and you could see a large body of marching men almost as far as Greenwich."

"I shall go up in your balloon, Perry," said Dian the Beautiful. "Go and get your bi-bi—whatever you called them, that I may look through them and see if David is returning. I have slept many times and we have had no word from him since his messenger came summoning Ghak."

"I think that we had better test it first," said Perry. "There might be something wrong with it. There have been isolated instances where some of my inventions have not functioned entirely satisfactorily upon their initial trial."

"Yes," agreed Dian the Beautiful.

"I shall put a bag of earth of more than twice your weight in the basket, send it up, and haul it down. That should prove an entirely adequate test."

"Yes" said Dian, "and please hurry."

"You are sure you are not afraid to go up?" asked Perry.

"When was a woman of Sari ever afraid?" demanded Dian.

HODON retraced his steps to the summit of the cliff above Kali. He had a plan, but it all depended upon Fash's imprisoning David Innes in the cave on the upper ledge of the village.

Just before he reached the summit of the cliff, he stopped and told O-aa to remain hidden among some bushes. "And *do not talk!*" he commanded.

"Why?" asked O-aa. "Who are you to tell me that I cannot talk?"

"Never mind about that" said Hodon "and don't start telling me about any of your relations. They make me sick. Just remember this: if you talk one of the warriors on guard may hear you and then there will be an investigation. And remember one more thing: if you talk before I come back here, I'll cut your throat. Can you remember that?"

"Wait until my brother—"

"Shut up!" snapped Hodon and walked away toward the top of the cliff.

As he neared it he got down on his belly and crawled. He wormed his way forward like an Apache Indian; and like an Apache Indian he carried a little bush in one hand. When he was quite close to the cliff edge, he held the little bush in front of his face and advanced but an inch at a time. At last he could peer over the edge and down upon the village of Kali. Once in position he did not move. He waited, waited with the infinite patience of primitive man.

He thought of David Innes, for whom he would have gladly laid down his life. He thought of O-aa and he smiled. She had spirit and the Sarians liked women with spirit. Also she was

undeniably beautiful. The fact that she knew it detracted nothing from her charm. She would have been a fool if she hadn't known it, and a hypocrite if she had pretended that she did not know that she was beautiful. It was true that she talked too much, but a talkative woman was better than a sullen one.

Hodon thought that O-aa might be very desirable but he knew that she was not for him—she had too frankly emphasized her dislike of him. However one sometimes took a mate against her will. He would give the matter thought. One trouble with that was that David Innes did not approve of the old fashioned method of knocking a lady over the head with a club and dragging her off to one's cave. He had made very strict laws on the subject. Now no man could take a mate without the girl's consent.

As these thoughts were passing through his mind he saw warriors approaching the village. They kept coming into view from an opening in the forest. Yes it was the Suvians with their prisoners. He saw David Innes walking with his head up, just as he always walked in paths of peace or paths of war. No one ever saw David Innes' chin on his chest. Hodon was very proud of him.

THERE was a brief halt at the foot of the cliff, and then some of the prisoners were herded toward the cliff and up the ladders. Would David Innes be one of these? So much depended on it that Hodon felt his heart beating a little faster.

All the prisoners could not be accommodated in the prison cave on the upper ledge. Some of them would have to be confined elsewhere or destroyed. Hodon was sure that no member of The Imperial Guard would accept

Fash's offer and prove a traitor to the Empire.

Yes! At last here came David Innes! The guards were particularly cruel to him. They prodded him with spears as he climbed the rickety ladders. They had removed the bonds from his wrists, but they had seen that he was at a safe distance from Fash before they did so.

Up and up he climbed. At last he was on the topmost ladder. Inwardly, Hodon whooped for joy. Now there was a chance. Of course his plan was full of bugs, but there was one chance in a hundred that it might succeed—one wild chance.

Just one little hour of night would have simplified things greatly but Hodon knew nothing of night. From the day of his birth he had known only one long, endless day, with the stationary sun hanging perpetually at zenith. Whatever he did now, as always, would have to be done in broad daylight among a people who had no set hours for sleeping; so that at least a half of them could be depended upon to be awake and watchful at all times.

He watched until he saw David Innes enter the prison cave; then he crawled back to O-aa. She was fast asleep! How lovely she looked. Her slim, brown body was almost naked, revealing the perfection of its contours. Hodon knelt beside her. For a moment he forgot David Innes, duty, honor. He seized O-aa and lifted her in his arms. He pressed his lips to hers. She awakened with a start. With the speed and viciousness of a cat, she struck—she struck him once across the mouth with her hand, and then her dagger sprang from its sheath.

Hodon leaped quickly back, but not quite quickly enough; the basalt blade ripped a six-inch slash in his chest. Hodon grinned.

"Well done," he said. "Some day you are going to be my mate, and I shall be very proud of you."

"I would as soon mate with a jalok," she said.

"You will mate with me of your own free will," said Hodon, "and now come and help me."

## V.

"YOU think you understand perfectly what you are to do?" asked Hodon a few minutes later, after carefully explaining his plan to O-aa.

"You are bleeding," said O-aa.

"It is nothing but a flesh wound," said Hodon.

"Let me get some leaves and stop it."

"Later," said Hodon. "You are sure you understand?"

"Why did you want to kiss me?" asked O-aa. "Was it just because I am so beautiful?"

"If I tell you, will you answer my question?"

"Yes," said O-aa.

"I think it was just because you are O-aa," said Hodon.

O-aa sighed. "I understand all that I am to do," she said. "Let us commence."

Together they gathered several large and small pieces of sandstone from a weathered outcropping, and inched them up to the very edge of the cliff. One very large piece was directly over the ladder which led to the next ledge below; others were above the mouth of the prison cave.

When this was accomplished, Hodon went into the forest and cut several long lianas and dragged them close to the cliff; then he fastened an end of each of them to trees which grew a few yards back.

"Now!" he whispered to O-aa.

"Do not think," she said, "because I have helped you and have not slipped my dagger between your ribs, that I do not hate you. Wait until my brother—"

"Yes," said Hodon. "After we have finished this you may tell me all about your brother. You will have earned the right. You have been splendid, O-aa. You will make a wonderful mate."

"I shall make a wonderful mate," agreed O-aa, "but not for you."

"Come on," said Hodon, "and keep your mouth shut—if you can."

She gave him a venomous look, but she followed him toward the edge of the cliff. Hodon looked over to be sure that everything was as he hoped it would be. He nodded his head at O-aa, and grinned.

He pushed the great stone nearer the edge, and O-aa did the same with some of her smaller ones. She watched Hodon very closely, and when she saw him pushing his over the edge, she stood up and hurled one of hers down.

The big stone struck the two guards squatting at the top of the ladder, carrying them and the ladder crashing down from ledge to ledge, carrying other ladders with them.

**H**ODON ran to the rocks that O-aa was hurling down, and O-aa ran to the lianas and dropped them over the edge. Hodon was calling David Innes by name. One of the other two guards had been hit and had fallen over the cliff; then David Innes and some of the other prisoners ran from the cave.

Only one guard opposed them. Neither O-aa or Hodon had been able to strike him with a rock. David Innes rushed him, and the guard met him on the narrow ledge with his short spear. As he lunged at Innes, the latter seized the weapon and struggled to

wrench it from the Suvian's grasp. The two men wrestled for the weapon on the brink of eternity. At any moment either of them might be precipitated to the foot of the cliff. The other prisoners seemed too stunned or too anxious to escape to go to Innes' assistance, but not Hodon. Sensing the danger to his chief, he slid down one of the lianas and ran to Innes' side. With a single blow he knocked the Suvian over the edge of the cliff; then he pointed to the lianas.

"Hurry!" he said. "They are already starting up the canyon to climb the cliff and head us off."

Each on a different liana, the two men clambered to the summit. Already most of the Kalians had disappeared into the forest. Innes had been the only Sarian confined on the upper ledge. Oose had not run away. He and another Kalian were talking with O-aa. Oose's companion was a squat, bearded fellow with a most unprepossessing countenance. He looked like a throw-back to a Neanderthal type. As Hodon and Innes approached the three, they heard O-aa say, "I will not!"

"Yes, you will," snapped Oose. "I am your father and your king. You will do as I tell you. Bug is a mighty hunter, a mighty fighter. He will make a fine mate. He has a large cave and three other women to lighten your labors."

O-aa stamped a sandalled foot. "I tell you I will not. I would just as soon mate with a Sagoth."

Now, the Sagoths are those half human gorilla men who did the strong arm work for the Mahars, the reptiles who dominated Pellucidar before David Innes drove them away—at least away from that portion of the inner world of which he was Emperor. O-aa could scarcely have voiced a more comprehensive insult.



Blug growled angrily. "Enough!" he said. "I take her." He reached for O-aa, but Hodon stepped between them and struck Blug's hand away.

"You do not take her," he said. "O-aa chooses her own mate."

**B**LU<sup>G</sup>, being more or less of an inarticulate low-brow, with a short temper, replied to words with action. He swung a terrific blow at Hodon that might well have felled a bos, had there been a bos there and had the blow landed; but there was no bos and the blow did not land. Hodon ducked under it, picked Blug up and hurled him heavily to the ground.

Blug was surprised and so was Oose, for Hodon looked like no match for the massive Blug. Hodon's muscles rolled smoothly beneath his bronzed skin—deceptively. They had great strength and they possessed agility. Blug had only strength; but he had courage, too—the courage of stupidity. He scrambled to his feet and charged Hodon—charged like a wild bull. And this time Hodon struck him full in the mouth and dropped him in his tracks.

"Enough of this!" snapped David Innes. "If you stand here fighting, we shall all be captured."

"Enough," said Oose to Blug.

"I shall kill him later, then," said Blug.

"What—again?" asked Hodon. He looked about him. "Where is O-aa?" he asked.

O-aa had fled. While the two men fought, she had run away. Maybe she thought, as Blug and Oose had thought, that Blug would easily kill Hodon.

"I did not see her go," said Oose. "When I find her, I shall beat her and give her to Blug."

"Not if I'm around," said Hodon.

"You should not interfere in the affairs of others, Hodon," counselled Da-

vid.

"It is my affair," said Hodon.

Innes shrugged. "Very well," he said; "but if it's your own funeral, too, do not say that I did not warn you. Now we must get away from here."

"There are some caves farther up the coast," said Oose, "that we have used at other times that Kali has been invaded. My people have probably gone there. We had better go there also."

"I shall remain near here," said Innes. "Many of my warriors are prisoners here. I cannot desert them."

"I will stay with you," said Hodon.

Oose and Blug moved away into the forest. "If you are around here when I come back," said the latter to Hodon, "I will kill you. I will bring my mate back to see me do it. I shall find O-aa at the other caves, and there I shall take her."

"You have a big mouth," said Hodon. "It fills so much of your head that there is no room for brains."

Blug did not retort. He could think of nothing to say, his powers of repartee being limited; so he disappeared into the forest wrapped in the gloomy cloak of anger.

"I hear the Suvians coming," said Innes.

"Yes," replied Hodon. "Come with me. I have become a little familiar with parts of this land, and I know where we can find a hiding place."

"I do not like to hide," said David Innes.

"Nor I; but two men cannot fight five hundred."

"You are right," said Innes. "Lead the way. I will follow you."

They moved away very quietly, Hodon trying to find rocks to step on wherever he could and Innes stepping always in the exact spots that Hodon stepped. When they came to a little

stream, Hodon entered it and walked up its bed. It would take an excellent tracker to follow them at all.

## VI

PERRY beamed with satisfaction, and Dian the Beautiful clapped her hands ecstatically. Many other Sarians, mostly women and children, stood open mouthed and goggle eyed. Every head was tilted back, every eye looked straight aloft to where a great gas bag partially eclipsed the eternal noon-day sun. The balloon was a success.

Its basket loaded with rock, it had risen at the end of its rope, as four stalwart Sarians payed out on the windlass. Everyone was surprised, none more so than Abner Perry; for this was the first one of his "inventions" that functioned on its initial trial. He would not have been greatly surprised had it instead of going up bored itself into the ground.

"This is a great day for Pellucidar, Dian," he said. "Won't David be surprised!"

True enough David was due for a big surprise.

As those who had been left behind in Sari watched the swaying balloon, like little children with a new toy, Ghak the Hairy One and his thousand fighting men sailed on toward Kali.

And Hodon led David Innes to a little canyon into the head of which tumbled a mountain brook in a waterfall of exquisite beauty. Continually watered by the spray and warmed by the never failing sun lush vegetation swarmed up the side of the cliff and spread out on the floor of the valley. Great sprays of orchids trailed down the rocky face of the cliff gorgeous corsages pinned to the breast of the mountain. Flowers that withered and died forever on the outer crust eons

ago challenged the beauty of the orchids, and hidden behind this mass of greenery and blooms was a little cave—a cave that could be defended by a single warrior against an army of stone age men.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Innes, "and not far from Kali. We can stay here until Ghak comes. We will take turns watching for him. Really, we should watch by the sea; but I want to be where I can also watch Kali; here my warriors are imprisoned. Perhaps an opportunity will come for us to get them out of the prison caves."

Fruit and nuts grew in abundance on the trees and shrubs of the little canyon; but fighting men require meat, and one must have weapons to have meat. These two had not even a stone knife between them, but the first men had no weapons originally. They had to make them.

INNES and Hodon went into the little stream and hunted around until they found a large mussel. They pried it open with a sharp stone, and each took a half shell. With these they cut two pieces of bamboo-like arborescent grass to form the hafts of two spears. Searching again they collected a number of stones: soft stones, hard stones, flat stones, stones with sharp edges; and with some of these they chipped and scraped at others until they had fashioned two spear heads and a couple of crude knives. While Hodon was finding the toughest fibers with which to bind the spear heads to the hafts, Innes made a bow and some arrows, for this was one of his favorite weapons.

How long all this took, of course there was no way of telling, other than that they ate several times and slept once. All in all, it may have taken them a week of outer earthly time, or half a day, or a year. Occasionally

one of them would go to a high point in the hills and look out across the country toward the coast always hoping to see Ghak the Hairy One and his warriors.

Hodon was hunting. He had gone out northeast of Kali a little farther this time than usual; for his luck had not been good. He had seen some game—red deer and orthopi the little primitive three toed horse that once ranged the outer crust—but something had always happened to frighten them away before he could get within spear range.

Of a sudden he heard a terrific roaring, and the crash of a heavy body coming through the undergrowth of the forest. Hodon looked for a tree that could be easily and swiftly scaled. He knew the author of that roar. It was a cave lion and the less business he had with a cave lion the happier he would be and the longer he would live.

He had just found a nice tree when he saw something burst from the underbrush in the direction from which the roaring was coming, but it was not a cave lion. It was O-aa. She was running like a scared rabbit and right behind her was the cave lion.

Hodon forgot the tree. The lion was not making as good progress through the underbrush as was O-aa. She was leaping as lightly and almost as swiftly as a springbok. Hodon ran to meet her.

"Go back!" she cried. "It is Ta-ho."

**H**ODON could see that it was Ta-ho, but he didn't go back. As O-aa passed him, he knelt and jammed the butt of his spear into the ground, holding the haft at an angle, the stone point ahead of him.

The spear was a little short for the purpose for which he was using it. With

a long spear some great hunters had killed the cave lion and the sabertooth tiger thus; but with a short spear such as his one would be almost sure to be mauled to death before death came to the beast. However, Hodon had never hesitated from the moment that he had seen O-aa.

The great lion rose snarling above him, its face a hideous mask of savagery; and then its momentum hurled it upon the spear point. Instantly Hodon leaped to one side and drew his puny stone knife; then he threw himself upon the back of the pain maddened beast tangling the fingers of one hand in its mane while with the other he plunged his knife through the thick hide into the beast's side.

The lion threw itself from side to side. It turned to seize the man-thing. It rolled upon the ground to dislodge him; and then, quite suddenly, it rolled over on its side. The spear had pierced its heart.

Hodon stood up and looked around him, searching for O-aa. She was nowhere in sight. He called her by name, but there was an answer. So, he had risked his life for her and she had run away from him! At that moment Hodon almost became a misogynist.

He started out to look for her with the intention of giving her a good beating when he found her. Being an excellent tracker it did not take him long to pick up her trail. He followed it as silently as though he were stalking the wariest of game for that he knew she would be.

Beyond the edge of the forest he saw her. Evidently she thought that she had eluded him, for she was walking along quite nonchalantly. The sight of her impertinent little back goaded Hodon to fury. He decided that a beating was far from adequate punishment; so he drew his stone knife from its scab-

bard and ran quietly after her determined to cut her throat.

After all, Hodon the Fleet One was only a cave man of the stone age. His instincts were primitive and direct, but they were sometimes faulty—as in this instance. He thought that the feeling that he harbored for O-aa was hate, when, as a matter of fact, it was love. Had he not loved her, he would not have cared that she ran away from him while he was risking his life for her. There are few sentiments more closely allied and inextricably intermingled than love and hate, but of this Hodon was not aware. At that moment he hated O-aa with utter singlemindedness and abandon.

**H**E CAUGHT up with O-aa and seized her by the hair, spinning her around so that he looked down into her upturned face. That was a mistake, if he really wished to kill her. Only a man with a stone where his heart should have been could have slit O-aa's throat while looking into her face.

O-aa's eyes were very wide. "You are going to kill me?" she asked. "When my brother—"

"Why did you run away from me?" demanded Hodon. "I might have been killed."

"I did not run away until I saw Ta-ho roll over dead," said O-aa.

"Why did you run away then?" Hodon's knife hand hung at his side, and he loosened his grasp on O-aa's hair. Hodon's rage was oozing out through his eyes as they looked into the eyes of O-aa.

"I ran away because I am afraid of you. I do not wish to mate with you or any other man until I am ready. I am not ready. No man has won me yet."

"I have fought for you," Hodon re-

minded her. "I have killed Ta-ho in your defense."

"Ta-ho is not a man," said O-aa, as though that settled the whole matter.

"But I fought Blug for you. Every time I fight for you you run away. Why do you do that?"

"That time, I was running away from Blug. I thought he would kill you and then come after me; and anyway, fighting Blug was nothing—you didn't kill him. I saw Blug and my father afterward, but they did not see me."

"So, I shall have to kill a man before you will mate with me?" demanded Hodon.

"Why, of course. I think you will have to kill Blug. I do not understand why he did not kill you when you fought. If I were you I should keep out of Blug's way. He is a very great fighter. I think he would break you in two. I should like to see that fight."

Hodon looked at her for a long minute; then he said, "I think you are not worth having for a mate."

O-aa's eyes flashed. "It is a good thing for you that my brother did not hear you say that," she said with asperity.

"There you go," said Hodon, "dragging in your family again. I am sick and tired of hearing of your family all the time."

As they talked, unconscious of any but themselves six strange looking creatures crept toward them through the underbrush.

## VII

**T**HE four Sarians at the windlass wound the balloon down to earth, and held it there while others removed the stone ballast. Everyone clustered around, examining it and heaping praise on Abner Perry. And Perry was so proud and happy that he felt like do-

ing a little dance.

"And now," said Dian, "I shall go up."

"Perhaps you had better wait until David comes," counselled Perry. "Something might happen."

"It took all that rock up," argued Dian, "and I do not weigh as much as the rock."

"That is not the point," said Perry. "It would take you up, all right; but I don't think you should go until after David gets back. As I said before, something *might* happen."

"Well, I am going," said Dian.

"What if I forbade it?" asked Perry.

"I should go anyhow. Am I not Empress of Pellucidar?" She smiled as she said it; but Perry knew that, Empress of Pellucidar or not, Dian the Beautiful would go up in the balloon if she wished to.

"Very well," he said; "I'll let you go up a little way."

"You'll let me go up to the end of the rope," she said. "I want to see if David is coming home."

"Very well," said Perry, resignedly. "Get in."

The other Sarians clustered around Dian as she clambered into the basket. Here was a new experience far beyond anything that they had ever imagined, and Dian the Beautiful was about to have it. They all envied her. They made little jokes and told her what to look for when she got up to the sun. They asked her all the questions outer Earth people might have asked under similar circumstances—all but one: nobody asked her if she were afraid. One does not ask a Sarian if he is afraid.

Perry signalled to the four men at the windlass and the balloon commenced to rise. Dian the Beautiful clapped her hands happily. "Faster!" she called to the four men at the windlass.

"Slower!" said Perry. "Take it easy."

Up and up went the great gas bag. A little breeze caught it, and it swayed to and fro. Dian felt very small up there all alone with that huge thing billowing above her.

"Can you see David?" some one shouted.

"Not yet," shouted Dian, "but I can see the Lural Az. Send me up higher!"

Soon almost all the rope was out, and Perry was glad; for then he could start pulling the balloon down. He was anxious to see Dian the Beautiful on terra firma again. Perhaps Perry had a premonition.

THE terrible creatures crept closer and closer to Hodon and O-aa. They were men, naked black men with long, prehensile tails. Their brows protruded above small, close set eyes; and there was practically no head above the brows. Short, stiff black hair grew straight out from their skulls; but their outstanding features was a pair of tusks that curved down from the upper jaw to below the chin.

"I wish," O-aa was saying, "that you would go away and leave me alone. I do not like you. If my brother—"

It was then that the creatures charged, roaring like beasts. With hands and tails, they seized Hodon and O-aa; and the two were helpless in their grasp. Chattering and jabbering among themselves they dragged their prisoners off into the forest.

Hodon tried to talk to them; but they did not understand him, nor could he understand them. They were very rough, slapping and cuffing their captives without provocation.

"Now we shall die," said O-aa.

"What makes you think so?" asked Hodon. "If they had intended to kill us, they could have done so when they attacked us."

"Do you not know what they are?"



With a mighty heave, he threw his adversary over his shoulder

asked O-aa.

"No," said Hodon. "I have never seen nor heard of such creatures before."

"They are the sabertooth men," she said. Of course she did not use the word *saber*. What she said was, roughly, the *taragtooth* men—the *tarag* being the sabertooth tiger. "They are man eaters," she added for good measure.

"You mean they are taking us home to eat?" demanded Hodon.

"Exactly," said O-aa.

"If you had come with me long ago, this would not have happened to you," said Hodon.

"Oh, there are worse things than being eaten by a sabertooth man," replied O-aa.

"Maybe you are right," agreed Hodon; "having to hear about your family, for instance."

"My brother is a mighty fighter," said O-aa. "He could break you in two, and my sister is very beautiful. You have no women in Sari so beautiful as my sister. She is almost as beautiful as I. My mother's father was so strong that he could carry the carcass of a full grown *bos* on his back."

"Now, I know you are lying," said Hodon. "Why must you lie so much, and always about your family? I am not interested in your family. I am only interested in you."

"My father is a king," said O-aa.

"He can be a *Sagoth*, for all I care. I do not wish to mate with your father."

"Now you will never mate with anybody," said O-aa. "Instead, you will be eaten by a sabertooth man and his mate."

"Maybe the same man will eat us both," said Hodon, grinning. "Then we shall be truly mated."

"If he does that to me I will give him a pain in his belly," said O-aa.

"You do not like me very well," said

Hodon.

"You are very stupid, if you have only just discovered that," replied O-aa.

"I do not understand why you don't like me. I am not bad to look at. I would be kind to you, and I can certainly protect you."

"This looks like it," said O-aa.

Hodon subsided.

TWO of the sabertooth men each had his tail wrapped around the neck of one of the captives. Thus they dragged them along, while other sabertooth men pushed, and slapped, and kicked their prisoners from the rear. The grotesque blacks kept jabbering. They reminded Hodon of the little hairy men who lived in the trees of the forests.

The cliff of Kali is the last rampart of a range of mountains that extend toward the northeast, parallel with the coast of the Lural Az. It was into these mountains that O-aa and Hodon were being dragged. The terrain became rougher as they ascended, the limestone formation giving way to volcanic rock. Extinct volcanos were visible on either hand. The vegetation was sparse and poor. It was a rough country.

Buffeted and bruised, the prisoners, were dragged at last to a yawning hole in the side of a mountain. Inside it was dark as a pocket, but the sabertooth men did not even pause on the threshold. Still jabbering, they entered the cavern and raced along as though in broad daylight. Neither O-aa nor Hodon could see a thing. They felt the smooth surface of the rock beneath their sandals and they could tell that they were ascending. Presently the ascent became so steep that they would have fallen back had not their captors supported them. Up and up they went, dragged by their necks. In the grip of the choking tails they were gasping

for breath.

At last the ascent became absolutely perpendicular and here were long lianas depending from above, and there was daylight. Above them they could see a round opening into which the sun shone, and they could see that they were ascending a circular shaft. They did not know it, but they were in a volcanic tube.

The sabertooth men swarmed up the lianas, dragging O-aa and Hodon with them; and when they reached the top of the tube both their prisoners were unconscious. Then they released them, and the two lay as though dead where they had fallen.

**D**IAN the Beautiful looked out across forest and rolling hills and fertile plains. She saw great herds of bos and red deer and herbivorous dinosaurs feeding on the lush vegetation. She saw the Lural Az curving upward, like Professor Einstein's time and space, until it was simply lost in the distance; for there is no horizon in Pellucidar. She saw Anoroc Island, where the copper-colored Mezops dwell in their tree houses; and beyond Anoroc, the Luana Islands. She could have seen Greenwich had it been more than an imaginary spot on an imaginary map. But she saw no sign of David Innes, though she strained her eyes until the tears came to them.

The four men at the windlass kept letting out more and more rope, their eyes on the balloon and not on the drum. Perry was watching the balloon, too. He felt that Dian the Beautiful had gone high enough and had been up long enough to have seen all that there was to see; so he turned to the men at the windlass to order them to haul the balloon down. What he saw brought a scream of horror from his throat.

At the same time, David Innes stood

upon a promontory above Kali and looked out toward the Lural Az. He was looking for Ghak the Hairy One, but his search was no more successful than had Dian's been. Slowly he made his way back to the hidden canyon. Hodon would have returned with meat, he thought; and they would feast; but Hodon was not there.

David went into the cave and slept, and when he awoke there was still no sign of Hodon. So David went out and made a kill himself. He ate many times and slept twice more, and still Hodon had not returned. Now David became worried, for he knew that Hodon would have returned had all been well with him. He determined to go and search for him, though he knew that it would be like searching for a needle in a hay stack.

He found Hodon's almost obliterated tracks, and he came upon the carcass of the cave lion. The dagger wounds in the beast's side and the spear wound in its breast told a graphic story. Then he discovered the prints of O-aa's little sandals.

What he read when he came to the spot at which the two had been captured by the sabertooth men filled him with apprehension. He saw great splayed, manlike footprints, and the trail of the party leading away to the northeast. For the most part, the spoor of O-aa and Hodon was obliterated by that of their captors; but David Innes saw enough to know that a party of creatures unknown to him had captured O-aa and Hodon.

There was but one thing to do: he must follow. This he did until the trail entered the dark mouth of the volcanic tube. He went in a short distance, but he could neither see nor hear anything; he felt a strong wind sucking in past him toward the interior of the cave. He came out and examined the



terrain. Above him lay the slope of an extinct volcano. He could see the rim of the crater sharply defined against the blue of the sky. Suddenly he had an inspiration, and he commenced the ascent of the mountain.

WHEN Hodon and O-aa regained consciousness they were still lying where they had fallen. All around them rose the walls of a volcanic crater, the level floor of which was covered with verdure. In the center was a small lake of blue water. Rude shelters were dotted about.

They found themselves surrounded by sabertooth people — men, women, and children. There was much jabbering in the strange, monkey-like language of these hideous people. They snarled and growled at one another and occasionally one of them would try to grab either O-aa or Hodon with a long, prehensile tail. Three or four large males stood close to the captives, and every time one of their fellows tried to seize either of them, he would be set upon and chased away. It was apparent to Hodon that they were being guarded, but why?

After they regained consciousness, these guards jerked them to their feet and led them away toward one of the shacks — an open structure with a flimsy grass roof. Here a large male squatted on the ground, and beside him was the strangest looking human being either Hodon or O-aa had ever seen. He was a little, wizened old man with a white beard that almost concealed the rest of his features. He had no teeth, and his eyes were the eyes of a very old man.

"Well," he said, looking them over, "you're certainly in a fix. Back in Cape Cod, we'd say you was in a Hell of a fix; but we ain't back in Cape Cod, and you never heard of Hell, un-

less this here place is it, which I sometimes believe; for doesn't the Good Book tell us that people go *down* to Hell? or doesn't it? Well, I dunno; but I came *down* to get to this here place, an' I don't believe Hell could be much worse." He spoke in Pellucidarian with a Cape Cod accent. "Well," he continued, taking a breath, "here you are. Do you know what's goin' to happen to you?"

"No," said Hodon; "do you?"

"Well, they'll probably fatten you up and eat you. That's what they usually do. They might keep you a long time. They're funny that way. You see they ain't no such thing as time down here; so how's a body to know how long it will be before you get fat or before they eat you? God only knows how long I been here. I had black hair and a good set o' teeth when I come, but look at me now! Maybe they'll keep you until your teeth fall out. I hope so, because I get danged lonesome for company down here. These here things aren't very good company."

"Why haven't they eaten you?" asked Hodon.

"Well, that there's a long story. I'll tell you all about it—if they don't eat you too quick."

THE large sabertooth man sitting beside the old man now commenced to jabber at him, and the old man jabbered back in the same strange tongue; then he turned to Hodon.

"He wants to know where you come from and if there's more like you real handy. He says that if you'll guide his people to your village, he won't have you killed right away."

"Tell him I've got to rest first," said Hodon. "Maybe I can think of a village where the people are all nice and fat."

The old man turned and translated this to the sabertooth man, who replied at some length.

"He says that's all right, and he'll send some of his people with you right away."

"Tell him I've got to rest first," said Hodon.

After some further conversation between the sabertooth man and the old man, the latter said: "You can come with me now. I'm to look after you until you have rested."

He got up, and Hodon and O-aa followed him to another shelter, which was much more substantially built than the others.

"This is my cabin," said the old man. "Sit down and make yourselves at home. I built this myself. Got all the comforts of home." The comforts of home were a bunk filled with dried grass, a table, and a bench.

"Tell me how you got here, and why they don't eat you," said Hodon.

"Well, the reason they don't eat me, or rather the reason they didn't eat me at first, was because I saved the life of that fellow you seen sitting beside me. He's chief. I think about the only reason they don't eat me now is because I'm too damned old and tough.

"Now, as to how I got here. I come from a place you never even heard of in a world you never heard of. You don't know it, but you're living in the center of a round ball; and on the outside is another world, entirely different from this one. Well, I come from that other world on the outside.

"I was a seafarin' man up there. Used to go whalin' up around the Arctic. Last time I went was an awful open summer up there. We went farther north than we'd ever been before, and no ice—just a great open polar sea as far as the eye could reach.

"Well, everything was lovely till we

run into the worst dod-blasted storm you ever see; and the Dolly Dorcas was wrecked. The Dolly Dorcas was my ship. I dunno what become of the others, but there was eight of us in the boat I was in. We had food an' water an' a compass an' sails as well as oars; but still it didn't look very good. We was way up in the Arctic Ocean an' winter comin' on. We could just about kiss ourselves goodbye.

"We sailed what we thought was south for a long time, and all the time the compass kept acting stranger an' stranger. You'd thought the dod-blasted thing had gone crazy. Then we ran out o' food, an' the fust thing you knowed we commenced to eat one another—startin' in on the weakest fust. Then some of 'em went crazy; an' two jumped overboard, which was a dirty trick when they knew we craved meat so bad.

"Well, to make a long story short, as the feller said, finally they wasn't nobody left but me; and then, dod-blast it, if the weather didn't commence to get warmer, and pretty soon I sighted land and found fruit and nuts and fresh water. Believe me, it was just in time too; for I was so doggone hungry I was thinkin' of cuttin' off one of my legs an' eatin' it."

O-AA sat wide eyed and wondering, drinking in every word. Hodon had never known her to be silent for so long. At last she had met her match.

"What's become of your brother and your mother's father?" asked Hodon.

"Eh! What's that?" demanded the old man.

"I was speaking to O-aa," said Hodon.

"Well, don't interrupt me. You talk too much. Now, where was I? You got me all confused."

"You were thinking of eating your

leg," said O-aa.

"Yes, yes. Well, to make a long story short, as the feller said, I was in Pellucidar. How I ever lived, I'll be doggone if I know; but I did. I got in with one tribe after another, an' none of 'em killed me for one reason or another. I learned the language an' how to hunt with spears. I made out somehow. Finally I stole a canoe an' set sail on the biggest doggone ocean you even seen. My beard was a yard long when I landed near here an' got captured by these things.

"Well, I better start feedin' you an' fattenin' you up. I reckon this gal will be pretty tasty eatin' right soon." He reached out and pinched O-aa's flesh. "Yum!" he exclaimed. "She's just about right now."

"Do you eat human flesh?" demanded Hodon.

"Well, you see I sort o' acquired a taste for it after the Dolly Dorcas was wrecked. Ole Bill was a mite tough an' rank, but there was a Swede I et who was just about the nicest eatin' you ever see. Yes, I eat what the Lord furnishes. I reckon I'm goin' to enjoy both of you."

"I thought you said you hoped they wouldn't eat us, because you would like to have our company," said O-aa.

"Yes, I'm sort o' torn between two loves, as the feller said: I loves to eat an' I loves to talk."

"We like to listen," said Hodon.

"Yes," agreed O-aa; "we could listen to you forever."

WHAT Perry had seen that had brought the scream to his lips was the end of the rope slipping from the drum. He had forgotten to have it made fast! He sprang forward and seized at the rope, but the free balloon leaped upward carrying the rope's end far above him. Of course his gesture

was futile, as a dozen men could not have held the great gas bag that Perry had made.

The old man looked up at the great balloon, rapidly growing smaller as it rose; then he sat down, and, covering his face with his hands, commenced to sob; for he knew that Dian the Beautiful was already as good as dead. No power on earth or within it could save her now.

How high she would be carried he could not even guess, nor how far from Sari. She would doubtless die from lack of oxygen, and then her body would be carried for a thousand miles or more before the bag would lose sufficient gas to bring it down.

He loved Dian the Beautiful as he would have loved a daughter, and he knew that David Innes worshipped her. Now he had killed Dian and wrecked David's life—the two people he loved most in the world. His silly inventions had done a little good and some harm, but whatever good they had accomplished had been wiped out by this. Worst of all, he realized, was his criminal absent-minded carelessness.

Dian felt the sudden upward rush of the balloon. She looked down over the edge of the basket and instantly realized what had happened. Everything was growing smaller down there. Soon she could no longer distinguish people. She wondered what would become of her. Perhaps she would be carried up to the sun and incinerated. She saw that the wind was carrying the balloon in a southwesterly direction.

She did not realize the greatest error of all that Perry had made; neither did Perry. He had aranged no rip cord on the gas bag. With that, Dian could have let gas out of the bag gradually and made a landing within a comparatively few miles from Sari. Perry was always leaving some essential thing off of

everything he built. His first musket had no trigger.

Dian the Beautiful guessed that she was as good as dead. She cried, but not because she was afraid to die. She cried because she would never see David again.

And David, far away, reached the rim of the crater and looked over. Below him, scarcely a hundred feet, he saw a round valley, green with verdure. He saw a little lake and grass thatched shelters and people. He saw Hodon and O-aa. His surmise had been correct.

He saw the strange sabertooth people. There were a couple of hundred of them. How could he, single handed, rescue Hodon and O-aa from such an overwhelming number of enemies?

DAVID INNES was resourceful; but the more he cudgelled his brains, the more hopeless a solution of his problem appeared. It would profit them nothing if he went down into the crater. That would mean simply his own capture; then he could do nothing for them.

He examined the crater closely. The inside walls were perpendicular and unscalable in all but a single place. There the wall had crumbled inward, the rubble forming an incline that reached to the top of the rim that was little more than fifty feet above the floor of the crater at that point. There was an avenue of escape, but how could he call Hodon's attention to it. How could he create a diversion that would take the attention of their captors from them long enough for them to make a break for freedom. Suddenly he recalled the wind rushing past him as he had stood in the darkness of the cavern that was the entrance to the crater. He turned and started down the mountainside.

The old man had been talking con-

stantly. Even O-aa could not get a word in edgewise, but at last he paused for a moment, probably to refresh his mind concerning the past, in which he lived.

Hodon seized upon this moment to voice a suggestion that had been in his mind for some time. "Why don't you escape?" he asked the old man.

"Eh? What? Escape? Why—er—I haven't thought of it since before my last bicuspid dropped out. But of course I couldn't escape."

"I don't see why not," said Hodon. "I don't see why the three of us couldn't escape. Don't you see that low place there? We could run up there in no time if you could find some way to get their attention somewhere else."

"M-m-m," murmured the old man thoughtfully. "Sometimes many of them are asleep at the same time. It might be done, but I doubt it. Anyway, what good would it do me to escape? I'd only be killed by the first tribe that captured me if some of the beasts didn't get me before."

"No," said Hodon. "I would take you to Sari. They would treat you well there. You might meet some old friends. There are two men from Hartford-Connecticut there."

The old man became instantly alert. "What do you know about Hartford, Connecticut?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said Hodon, "but these men do. I have heard them speak of it many times."

"How did they get down here? That must be a story like mine. I'll bet they'd like to hear my story."

"I know they would," said O-aa, who was nobody's fool. "I think you ought to come with us."

"I'll think it over," said the old man.

DAVID INNES made his way to the entrance to the tube. He gathered

dry wood and leaves and green grass. and he piled it far into the tube, with the grass on top. Then he made fire and lighted it. As soon as he saw that it was burning freely, he ran from the tube and started up the side of the mountain as fast as he could go.

When he reached the top and looked over he saw smoke rising from the opening into the tube. Already a jabbering crowd of sabertooth men were gathered about it. Others were joining them. David was just about to risk everything by shouting to Hodon to run for the low place in the rim, when he saw O-aa, Hodon, and another walking toward it. He saw that the third member of the party was not one of the natives; so he assumed it must be another prisoner.

The diversion that Hodon had hoped for had occurred almost miraculously, and the three lost no time in taking advantage of it.

"You are sure, are you, that these men from Hartford, Connecticut, are where we are going?" demanded the old man. "Dod-burn you, if they ain't, I'll eat you the first chance I get."

"Oh, they're there all right," said O-aa. "I saw them just before we left."

Hodon looked at her in amazement not unmixed with admiration. "We may see one of them before we get to Sari," he said. "He was with me just before we were captured."

"I hope so" said the old man. "I'd sure like to see some one from Hartford. By gum, I'd even like to see some one from Kansas."

"Oh," said O-aa with a shrug. "We know lots of people from Kansas. You can see all you want."

Hodon's expression turned to one of awe, but now they were at the base of the shelving rubble. He looked back. Every single sabertooth was gathered around the smoking vent; not an eye was turned in their direction. "Start

up slowly," he cautioned. "Do not start to hurry unless they discover what we are doing; then you'll really have to climb. Once on the outside you and I, O-aa, can outdistance any of them, but I don't know about the old man."

"Listen son," said that worthy. "I can run circles around you and all your family. Why, when I was a young man they used to race me against race horses. I'd give 'em two lengths start and beat 'em in a mile."

Hodon didn't know what a horse was; but he had an idea that whatever it was the old man was lying; so he said nothing. He was thinking that between O-aa and the old man it was a toss-up.

They reached the summit without being detected; and as they started down, Hodon saw David coming toward him. He hurried forward to meet him. "It was you who started the fire that made the smoke wasn't it? But how did you know we were in the crater?"

"Is this one of the men from Hartford?" demanded the little old man.

"Yes" said Hodon, "but don't start telling him the story of your life now. Wait until we get out of reach of your friends."

DIAN was surprised to discover that the nearer the sun she got the colder she was. She was also mystified by the noises she heard in her ears and the difficulty she had in breathing; but even so, she gave little thought to her own danger. She could think only of David—David whom she would never see again.

The balloon was drifting now at an even altitude. It would rise no higher. Eventually it would commence to drop lower; but before it came to earth, Dian the Beautiful might be dead of hunger and exhaustion. Being practically naked, except for a most sketchy loin cloth, she was already chilled through

and shivering.

A hunting party far below saw the strange thing floating toward them; and they ran and hid beneath trees, thinking it some new and terrible reptile. Dacor the Strong One, Dian's brother, was in the party. Little did he dream that his sister floated there high above him. He and his companions would tell of the awful creature they had seen; and the story would grow in the telling, but nothing which they could fabricate could equal the truth, if they could have known it.

The sabertooth people are not very bright, but they do know what a volcano is; because there is an intermittently active one in the mountains not far from their own crater; so, putting two and two together, they assumed that their own volcano was about to become active. Had they been just a little bit more intelligent, they would have reasoned that wood smoke does not come from a volcano; but all they knew was that it was smoke and smoke meant fire; and they were afraid.

The best thing to do, then, was to get out of the crater; so they turned to the low point in the crater's rim. It was then that they discovered that their prisoners had escaped.

As they swarmed out of the crater, they were not only frightened but angry. No prisoner had ever escaped before, and they didn't purpose letting these prisoners get away with it. Being good trackers capable of moving with great speed, they had no doubt but that they would soon overhaul the fugitives. The latter however, were also fleet of foot; and they had two advantages: they did not have to watch for spoor to follow, and they were fleeing for their lives. There is no greater spur to honest and concentrated effort than this. Even the old man revealed amazing possibilities as he scampered in the

wake of the others.

David and Hodon, being congenitally opposed to flight, hated the position in which they found themselves; but what were they to do? David alone was armed. He carried his crude bow and arrows and a stone knife but these were not enough to repel an attack by a numerically greater force of savage beasts such as the sabertooth men.

While they did not yet know that they were being followed, they assumed that they would be; and the old man had assured them that they would.

"I been there since before my teeth began falling out," he said "an' you can lay to it that they'll follow us all the way to hell an'-gone, for they ain't no prisoner ever escaped from 'em in my time."

**H**ODON, who was leading, guided them toward the little canyon where he and David had found sanctuary; and they succeeded in reaching its mouth before the first of the pursuers came within sight. It was just after they entered it that a chorus of savage roars told them that the sabertooth men had overtaken them.

David glanced back. Racing toward him were three or four of the swiftest males and strung out behind them were other bucks and shes and young—the whole tribe was on their heels!

"Get the others into the cave, Hodon!" he called. "I'll hold them up until you're all in."

Hodon hesitated. He wanted to come back and fight at David's side.

"Go on!" shouted the latter. "We'll all be lost if you don't," then Hodon raced on toward the cave with O-aa and the old man.

David wheeled about and sent an arrow into the breast of the leading savage. The fellow screamed and clutched at the shaft; then he spun around like

a top and crashed to earth. A second and a third arrow in quick succession found their marks, and two more sabertooth warriors writhed upon the ground. The others paused. David fitted another arrow to his bow and backed away toward the cave.

The sabertooths jabbered and chattered among themselves. Finally a huge buck charged. Hodon and O-aa were in the cave; and the former, reaching down, grasped the hand of the old man and dragged him up. David was still backing toward the cave, holding his fire. His supply of arrows would not last forever; so he must not miss.

The great brute was almost upon him before he loosed his shaft. It drove straight through the heart of the buck, but there were others coming behind him. Not until he had dropped two more in rapid succession did the others pause momentarily; then David turned and raced for the cave. At his heels came the whole tribe of sabertooths, roaring and screaming. They came in mighty leaps and bounds, covering the ground twice as rapidly as David.

Hodon stood in the mouth of the cave. "Jump!" he cried to David. He leaned out and down, extending his hand. As David leaped upward toward the cave mouth, a sabertooth at his heels reached out to seize him; but simultaneously a bit of rock struck the fellow full between the eyes, and he stumbled forward on his face. O-aa, grinning, brushed the dust from her hands.

Hodon pulled David into the cave. "I never thought you'd make it," he said.

THERE were extra spears and arrows in the cave and a little food. The waterfall dropped so close that they could reach out and catch water in a cupped hand. They would not

suffer from thirst. One man with a spear could defend the entrance against such ill-armed brutes as the sabertooths. Altogether, they felt rather secure.

"These brutes won't stay here forever," said David. "When they find they can't get us, they'll go away."

"You don't know 'em," said the old man. "They'll stick around here 'til Hell freezes over, but the joke's goin' to be on them."

"What do you mean?" asked David.

"Why, instead of gettin' four of us, they're only goin' to get one," explained the old man.

"How's that?" inquired David.

"We can't get no food in here," said the old man; "so we gotta eat each other. I reckon I'll be the last man. I'm too dod-burned old and tough to eat. Even the sabertooths wouldn't eat me. This here'll make a tender morsel. I reckon we'll start on her."

"Shut up!" snapped David. "We're not cannibals."

"Well, neither was I back at Cape Cod. I would have reared up on my hind legs an' fit anybody then that had said I'd ever eat man, woman, or child; but then I hadn't never nearly starved to death, nor I didn't know what good eatin' some people can be after you get used to it. Before you come along I was tellin' these other two about that sweet Swede I et once."

"You also said," interposed O-aa, "that after you'd eaten all your friends you were about to cut your leg off and start eating yourself."

"Yes," admitted the old man, "that's plumb right."

"Then," said O-aa, "when you get hungry, you'd better start eating yourself; because you're not going to eat any of us."

"That's what I calls plumb selfish," said the old man. "If we don't eat each other, the sabertooths are goin' to eat

us; an' I'd think you'd rather be eaten by a friend than by one of them critters."

"Look here—er—what is your name, anyway?" David spoke with marked asperity.

The old man puckered his brow in thought. "Dod-burn it!" he exclaimed at last. "What the dickens is my name? I'll be dod-burned if I ain't plumb forgot. You see I ain't heard it since I was a young man."

"I think," said O-aa to David, "that his name is Dolly Dorcas."

"Well, never mind," said David; "but get this straight: there's to be no more talk of eating one another. Do you understand?"

"Wait until you get good *an'* hungry," said the old man; "then it won't be a matter of talking about it."

David rationed out what food there had been stored in the cave—mostly nuts and tubers; as these would not spoil quickly. Each had his share. They took turns watching, while the others slept, if they cared to; and as there was nothing else to do, they slept a great part of the time. It is a custom of Pellucidarians. They seem to store up energy thus, so that they need less sleep afterward. Thus they prepare themselves for long journeys or arduous undertakings.

Some of the sabertooths remained in the canyon at all times. They made several attempts to storm the cave, but after being driven off easily, they gave up. They would starve their quarry out.

The food supply in the cave dwindled rapidly. David presently suspected that it dwindled fastest while the old man was on watch and the others slept; so once he feigned sleep and caught the old man taking a little food from the supply of each of the others and hiding it in a crevice in the back of the cave.

He awoke the others and told them, and O-aa wanted to kill the old man at once. "He deserves to die," said David, "but I have a better plan than that of killing him ourselves. We'll drop him down to the sabertooths."

The old man whimpered and begged, and promised never to do it again; so they let him live, but they did not let him stand watch alone again.

AT last their food was all gone, and the sabertooths were still in the canyon. The besieged were ravenous. They drank quantities of water to allay the craving for food. They were getting weaker and weaker, and David realized that the end was near. They slept a great deal, but fitfully.

Once, when O-aa was standing watch, David awoke with a start; and was horrified to see the old man sneaking up behind her with a spear. His intentions were all too obvious. David called a warning and leaped for him—but just in time.

Hodon awoke. The old man was grovelling on the floor of the cave. O-aa and David were looking down at him.

"What has happened?" demanded Hodon.

They told him. Hodon came toward the old man. "This time he dies," he said.

"No! No!" shrieked the terrified creature. "I was not going to keep it all for myself. I was going to share it with you."

"You beast!" exclaimed Hodon, picking up the spear the old man had dropped.

Screaming the latter leaped to his feet; and, running to the mouth of the cave, sprang out.

A hundred sabertooths were in the canyon. Straight toward them the old man ran, screaming at the top of his voice, his eyes wild with terror, his



toothless mouth contorted.

The sabertooths fell aside, shrinking from him; and through the lane they made the old man fled and disappeared in the forest beyond the end of the canyon.

**G**HAK the Hairy One, with a thousand warriors, marched up to Kali. He did not know that Fash, the king of Suvi, had conquered it; so he was surprised when his advance guard was attacked as they neared the cliff. However, it made no difference to Ghak the Hairy One whether he fought Suvian or Kalian.

Fash had thought that the advance guard constituted the whole force with which he had to deal, as it was his own custom to hold all his warriors in one body when he attacked. He did not know that David Innes had taught the Sarians a different method of warfare, which was unfortunate for Fash.

When Ghak's main body came up, Fash's men scattered in all directions. A number retreated to the caves of Kali. The Sarians swarmed up after them before they could remove the ladders. Men fought hand to hand on the narrow ledges all the way up to the highest ledge. Here, cornered Suvians leaped to their death; and at last Ghak the Hairy One stood victorious above the caves of Kali.

Then the Sarian prisoners came from their prison caves and for the first time Ghak learned that David's little force had been either killed or made prisoner and that David was missing. All agreed that he must be dead.

Ghak's force rested and fed at the Kali cliff; and then victorious but sad, started back to their ships waiting on the Lural Az. They had scarcely left the cliff when a strange figure of a man came dashing out of the forest — a toothless little old man with an enor-

mous white beard. His beard was stained with the juice of berries and the pulp of fruit. He jibbered and yammered like the little hairy men who live in the trees of the forest.

The warriors of Sari had never seen a creature like this before; so they captured him, as they might have captured any strange animal and took him to show to Ghak.

"Who are you?" demanded Ghak.

"Are you going to kill me?" The old man was whimpering, the tears rolling down his cheeks.

"No," Ghak assured him. "Tell me who you are and what you are doing here."

"My name is *not* Dolly Dorcas," said the old man, "and I was going to divide O-aa with the others; but Hodon wanted to kill me."

"Hodon!" exclaimed Ghak. "What do you know of Hodon?"

"I know that he was going to kill me, but I ran away."

"Where is Hodon?" demanded Ghak.

"He and David and O-aa are in the cave. The sabertooth men are waiting to eat them."

"What cave? Where is it?" asked Ghak.

"If I told you, you'd take me back there and Hodon would kill me," said the old man.

"If you lead us to where David and Hodon are, no one will kill you. I promise you that," Ghak assured him.

"And you'll see that I get plenty to eat?"

"All you can hold."

"Then follow me, but look out for the sabertooths; they will eat you all unless you kill them."

**O-AA** looked very wan and weak.

Hodon looked at her and tears almost came to his eyes; then he spoke to David.

"David" he said "perhaps I have done wrong. I have hoarded my ration of food, eating only half of it."

"It was yours to do with as you wished," said David. "We shall not take it from you."

"I do not want it" said Hodon. "I saved it for O-aa, and now she needs it."

O-aa looked up and smiled. "I hoarded mine too, Hodon," she said. "I saved it for you. Here it is." She took a little package of food wrapped in the large leaves that grew over the mouth of the cave, and handed it to Hodon.

David walked to the mouth of the cave and looked out down the little canyon; but everything was blurred, as though he were looking through a mist.

Hodon knelt beside O-aa. "A woman would do that only for the man she loved" he said.

O-aa nodded and crept into his arms. "But I have not killed Blug," said Hodon.

O-aa drew his lips down to hers.

"What will your brother and sister say?" asked Hodon.

"I have no brother or sister," said O-aa.

Hodon held her so tight that she gasped for breath.

Presently the mist cleared, and David could see quite plainly. He saw sabertooths who had been outside the canyon running in. They were jabbering excitedly. Then he saw human warriors approaching, warriors who carried muskets. There were many of them. When the sabertooths charged them, they were mowed down by a ragged volley. The noise was terrific, and clouds of black smoke filled the mouth of the canyon.

At the noise of the muskets, O-aa and Hodon ran to the mouth of the cave.

"Ghak has come," said David. "Now everything is all right."

It was well that he was to have a brief interlude of happiness before he returned to Sari.

THE END

## « « ODORS » »

WE KNOW that certain animals react rather violently to odors. A dog knows by the odors you emit whether or not you fear him, because, when afraid, your body gives off a distinct fluid which an animal's sensitive olfactory system can easily detect. It is said that a dog is more apt to attack a man who gives evidence of fear than one who shows no sign of fear. That is why some children, not realizing their danger, have been known to pet otherwise ferocious animals.

The odor of blood is said to have a similar effect upon animals. In the West Indies the natives are careful to inspect all their cattle for open wounds before letting them go near water infested with the deadly barracuda. The cattle will go unharmed as long as the terrible barracuda doesn't get a whiff of blood. But if these tiger fish smell blood, they'll devour a whole cow before it can cross a stream.

Scientists, knowing these facts, have been trying to synthetically recreate these odors with a possible eye toward changing the living habits of certain animals simply by spraying various odors into

the air. Leonard A. Ford and Donald F. Clausen, writing in an article in the American Chemical Society's periodical, have artificially reproduced the odor of skunk—of all things—and have found that this odor will make white rats fight and kill each other.

Clausen and Ford have also discovered that pleasant odors can be reproduced from what is known as a mercaptan. The mercaptan producing the skunk-odor is known as an n-butyl mercaptan. Other mercaptans produce odors undetectable by the human olfactory organs and some scientists believe it possible to eventually produce mercaptans which can even go so far as to change human habits.

They foresee the possibility of mercaptans which will make men suddenly fly at each other's throats and others—much needed now—which will make men suddenly like each other, even when their hates have been handed down from generation to generation. It's hard to believe that the peace of the world may some day depend on a smell, but that day might not be so far off.

*Consista Arabella*

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SPECIAL JANUARY ISSUE

# RADIO NEWS

AT NEWSSTANDS EVERYWHERE DEC. 26th!






# The MAN Who Changed History

by JOHN YORK CABOT

Reggie Vliet couldn't marry into a family with the fancy heritage that was the Vanderveers'. But he could go into the past and make a few changes. . . !



"Thief!" yelled one soldier.  
"We have a thief in our  
midst! Get the bounder,  
men, and string him up!"

"SAY what you have to say, young man. Say what you have to say, and stop standing there simpering like some blasted clown!" Colonel Vanderveer demanded testily, glaring at the blond, young man in the frock coat and striped trousers.

Reggie Vliet shifted uncomfortably. This was not as he had planned it. He had known that Colonel Vanderveer would be as easy to handle as a wounded bear, but he had hoped that he could talk the old duffer out of his usual nasty frame of mind. But then Reggie's face assumed its bland smile

once more as he shrugged inwardly. A start, he concluded, was better than none at all.

"Colonel Vanderveer," Reggie said, clearing his throat. "I want to talk to you about"—and he grabbed the bull by the horns—"your daughter."

"You do, eh?" the Colonel's tone was as soft as a file on a rusty hinge.

"Yes, I do—sir."

"HMMMMM," the Colonel regarded Reggie with rheumy eyes. "I suppose," he measured his words menacingly, "you are ass enough to want her hand in marriage?"

Reggie smiled swiftly. This was capital. The old boy got right down to the point. Must have suspected it all along. Why, it was a breeze. The old goat would probably say a few fatherly words, and that would be that.

"Yes, sir. You guessed it. But I wouldn't say I was an ass, sir. She isn't as bad as all that. Why Sandra has any number of good points, and I—"

Colonel Vanderveer rose behind his huge mahogany desk, and to Reggie, his lantern jaw never seemed squarer, or his eyes more baleful. He was gazing at Reggie with the curious interest of a man who has seen something scuttle out from under a damp board on a rainy day.

"Get the hell out of my study, you young whippersnapper!"

"But—" Reggie's protest was a muffled bleat as he backed three steps away from the figure of wrath.

"*You*, marry a Vanderveer!" The Colonel was shouting wildly, now. Shouting wildly and waving his arms in great confused circles. "You, a snivelling young blatherskite without a single scrap of family background. Don't try to argue with me, young man. I'm no damned fool. I've been shaking the branches of your family tree for the

last two days, ever since I suspected that you and my daughter Sandra were getting sentimental and sloppy about one another!"

"But—!"

"Why, sir," the colonel bellowed, really beginning to warm up to his subject. "Do you realize that the Vanderveer's have the finest, the most noble lineage, heredity, ancestry, of any family in this country? Why, the nerve, the insolence of your presumption, sir, is enough to nauseate even the most tolerant of men!"

"Yes, but—" Reggie began.

COLONEL VANDERVEER, however, was plunging onward. "Look," he bellowed, turning slightly to point to two portraits hanging side by side behind his huge study desk. "Look at those portraits, sir! Those, sir, are my forebearers, my noble ancestors. They are the two most glorious heroes of a noble Vanderveer line. The illustrious hero on the right," thundered the Colonel, pointing to one of the portraits, "is none other than Major Lucius Vanderveer, brilliant military genius without whose aid to General Sheridan, the Union Army never would have been able to win the American Civil War.

The Colonel paused only long enough to take a deep and reverent breath. Then he barged loudly ahead. "And this second portrait," he bellowed, pointing to the painting on his left, "is that of Colonel Horatio Vanderveer, possibly the most glorious of all my line. It was Major Horatio Vanderveer who gave the Duke of Wellington invaluable assistance in defeating Napoleon at Waterloo!"

"But—!"

"Don't interrupt me, sir. Haven't you even background enough to know that a gentleman never interrupts an-

other gentleman? Bah. What are you, sir. A Vliet! Nothing but a Vliet. And where, sir, were the Vliets among the world builders? Tell me that, just tell me that! Nowhere, sir. That's where they were. Why, there isn't a single Vliet anywhere on the pages of History. Not a single Vliet on anything but twentieth century police records!"

"I had a grandfather who was a whisky drummer in Mississippi," Reggie offered timidly.

"Whissssssssky drummer, indeed! You're a charlatan, young man. That is precisely what you are, sir. A charlatan!" The Colonel was pointing a horny and dramatic finger at the door of his study. "Get out of here, you young upstart. There is no room for the son of a son of a whisyyyy drummer in the Vanderveer line. That, sir, is final. I will not have the famous, the glorious, the splendid Vanderveer name polluted by intermarriage with a descendant of gypsies!"

Colonel Vanderveer's red face had turned stark crimson, and he was making fuzzy grabs at small objects on his desk. The line in his lantern jaw was twitching in frenzy. Reggie noted all this, and stepped quickly out of the study, closing the door behind him. He heard a blunt object thudding against the door, and shrugging his slim shoulders dejectedly, turned off down the hallway of the Vanderveer mansion . . .

**R**EGGIE found Sandra Vanderveer waiting for him in the garden of the Vanderveer estate. She was slim, pretty, and brunette. She was dressed in blue slacks. Her face wore a look of anxious concern.

"Reggie, have you seen him?"

Reggie Vliet absently plucked a bit of fluff from the crease in his impeccable morning trousers.

"Yes, old girl. I saw him. Somehow, I am beginning to suspect that your father doesn't take to me."

Sandra's eyes became suddenly moist.

"Oh, Reggie, no. He didn't refuse?"

"He objected," Reggie corrected her, "violently." He shuddered. Faint in the distance he heard sounds that might have been the continued bull rantings of Colonel Vanderveer.

Sandra Vanderveer's lovely blue eyes were suddenly filled with tears. And while Reggie put his arms around her waist, she clung to him, sobbing.

"Oh, Reggie, Reggie. This is terrible. What are we going to do?"

Reggie looked resigned.

"It's tough, old dear. But after all, we can elope."

"Elope?" Sandra wailed the word.

"Certainly. Nothing to it. Just pop off and get married. People do it all along, you know."

"But, Reggie. We can't. I wouldn't dare. What could we live on?"

Reggie frowned.

"I hadn't thought of that."

"You haven't any job," Sandra reminded him softly, for this was a delicate subject. Reggie was engrossed in deep brooding.

"I must think," he muttered. "I must get off somewhere and put the Vliet brain to the wheel. You can't cook an omelette without breaking the egg, you know."

"Oh Reggie," Sandra breathed, eyes shining. "You're wonderful."

Reggie nodded, gloom returning to his face.

"I know," he conceded. "But now I must go off somewhere and think."

Turning on his heel, Reggie left Sandra in the garden, gazing in wistful awe at his retreating figure. There was scotch and soda, and solitude in the Vanderveer library. It was good scotch,

and he could do his thinking there . . .

**B**UT thinking in the Vanderveer library was not the easy job that Reggie Randhope had imagined it would be; even from a deep leather chair, with a bottle and siphon beside him. For the walls of the room were alternately lined with books, and pictures.

The books were bad enough. The titles concerned such grave matters as "Complete Guide To Ancestry," "Burkes Peerage," "Who's Who In Outer Arabia," and many more such volumes. Their morocco covers brought back to Reggie the realization that he was nothing but a Vliet. Just a Vliet. Not even a Lincoln, or an Adam.

Until Colonel Vanderveer's outburst of the afternoon, Reggie had never been particularly conscious of the fact that he was a Vliet. Neither had he been particularly ashamed of it. Of course he knew something of the importance attached to the legend of the Vanderveers. No man engaged to marry a Vanderveer could help but know the history of the Clan. If not completely, at least from the year 920 B.C. up to the French Revolution.

Reggie had even realized that his own family crest was somewhat lacking in comparison to the Vanderveer escutchen. However, being an extremely confident young modern, it had never entered his head that this difference in family background might become the stumbling block to his marital ambitions.

But old Colonel Vanderveer had looked Reggie Vliet up. He had, in his own words, "shaken every damned limb" of the Vliet family tree. And now he was reacting as though he had found the thing infested with chattering monkeys, or fungoid growths.

Reggie Vliet sipped his scotch reflectively

and frowned. It was obvious that something had to be done. Colonel Vanderveer had to be brought to his knees, or at least to his ankles.

And at this moment Lowndes appeared.

Lowndes was the butler of the Vanderveer manor. Lowndes had brooding eyes and a mouth full of gold teeth. His trouser cuffs reached only to his ankles—a fact which everyone pretended not to notice, inasmuch as Lowndes was generally known to be eccentric.

Reggie regarded Lowndes. The fellow had an unpleasant habit of appearing unexpectedly, just as he had done now.

"Hello, Lowndes," Reggie said at last. "Where did you pop from?"

Lowndes looked imperturbably at him, while bending over to fix a flower in a vase.

"From the thirteenth century, sir," Lowndes replied.

"Oh." Reggie considered this. "That's nice, Lowndes."

Then Reggie again put his mind to thinking a way out of his dilemma. But the pictures and the books all around him continued to be bothersome. And something else was, too. Something Lowndes had said.

Reggie frowned.

"Lowndes?" Reggie looked up. "What was it that you just said?"

**L**OWNDES was arranging a lamp on a table.

"I said I just came back from the thirteenth century, sir."

"I see, the thirteenth century," Reggie said reflectively. Then: "That's quite a bit off, isn't it Lowndes? I mean, in time and all that? Sort of difficult to get to, I'd imagine."

Lowndes gazed tolerantly at Reggie.

"Oh, no sir. Not at all, sir. Not for



me it isn't."

Reggie considered this.

"Not for you?"

Lowndes smiled confidentially.

"Oh, no sir. I can go anywhere I please in time. I can just zip off. Do it constantly, sir. An interesting hobby, sir."

Reggie nodded.

"I should imagine. No end of fun, what? How do you go about it? Any special trick?"

Lowndes smiled confidently.

"My watch, sir." He pointed to a wrist watch on his left hand. "It's a time machine stripped down to the essentials. Made it myself. A very cunning job, if I do say so, sir."

Reggie looked at the watch on the butler's wrist.

"Well," he declared, "this *is* rather novel. An odd sort of timepiece."

"Decidedly odd, sir." There was staunch pride in Lowndes tone. "I can just set it, as one would an ordinary watch, to any one of the centuries designated on the face of it."

"And off you'll go, to that particular century?" There was a marveling tone in Reggie's voice. A shrewd fellow, Lowndes.

Lowndes nodded.

"Yes, sir. Off I'll go, after I press this little button on the side." He indicated a button beneath the mainspring.

"Try it, Lowndes," Reggie suggested. "Shock me, old boy."

And while Reggie looked on in appreciation, Lowndes pressed the button beneath the mainspring and quite promptly *vanished*.

Reggie drew his breath in sharply.

"Well," he ejaculated, "what won't they think of next?"

And in the next instant, Lowndes was back in the room again, standing before him and smirking proudly.

"You see, sir. Simple, eh?"

Reggie nodded.

"Where did you go to then?"

"The time of Christopher Columbus," Lowndes said calmly. "Back in the fifteenth century."

The smile was still on Reggie's features, the same bland, wondering smile. But a new glint was creeping into his eyes. And he looked around the walls of the library, from which the paintings of countless Vanderveers hung. Vanderveers in uniform, Vanderveers in costumes of state, Vanderveers on horses, Vanderveers signing great documents. All very impressive. All very historical.

It was then that Reggie noticed all the paintings were concerned with the dignified and very historical antics of the two most prominent of the Vanderveer clan, namely, Major Lucius Vanderveer, and Colonel Horatio Vanderveer. They were evidently the prize roots from the Vanderveer family tree, Reggie realized, especially since these two gents were the ones whose portraits hung behind the desk in Colonel Vanderveer's study.

And then the idea exploded in a blinding flash upon his brain.

He had it—had it proper! The Vanderveer family tree. The one thorn in the toe of his marriage, was based on these two historical old duffers who had been forebearers of the proud Vanderveer line.

Reggie thought aloud.

"Supposing" he wondered, "that these two old ducks in the pictures on the walls hadn't been famous?"

"Eh, sir?" Lowndes was puzzled.

Reggie waved his hand impatiently.

"One moment, Lowndes, I am thinking!" Then he drove on to the nub of this great idea that was dawning upon him. Supposing history hadn't been what it was? Wouldn't it then be pos-

sible that the Vanderveers might not have been famous? It would not only be possible, it would undoubtedly be probable. If history were different, there would be no place for the Vanderveer pride in a family tree. And old Colonel Vanderveer couldn't be so confounded arrogant. And he, Reggie Vliet, could marry Sandra Vanderveer just like that!

THE thought was staggering, stupendous, colossal. And, better than that, it was a good, an excellent, a splendid idea!

Reggie grabbed Lowndes by the arm.

"Lowndes old boy," he breathed excitedly. "That dingus on your wrist—"

"You mean my simplified time machine?" Lowndes asked coldly. "And while you're speaking of the scientific side of me, sir, I'd prefer you to call me *Doctor Lowndes*."

"No offense, Lowndes, I mean Doctor Lowndes," Reggie was babbling rapidly. "I am in a great state of excitement. What I want to know is this—do you ever lend your time whatcham'callit to anyone?"

"You want to borrow it, sir?"

Reggie nodded excitedly.

"That's it, Lowndes. I want to borrow it for a little while. I just thought of a few people and one or two things I'd like to take care of."

"Back in Time, sir?" Lowndes asked.

"Right, back in Time. You see, Lowndes, I mean Doctor Lowndes, here's the story." And Reggie lowered his voice to an excited whisper as he outlined his plan to the Vanderveer butler. Lowndes listened gravely, nodding now and then.

"I think you might be able to do it, sir," Lowndes said at last. "And, just between the two of us," Lowndes lowered his voice, "I have no particular relish for the blusterings of Colonel

Vanderveer, myself. Perhaps, sir, if you mess up Time sufficiently, I shall be the employer of the old tyrant, rather than vice versa, as it is now." A thoughtful gleam came into Lowndes' dark brooding eyes.

Reggie was bubbling, now.

"Capital, Lowndes, capital. You probably shall. Now, if you'll just explain the workings of this Time thing-amajig, and hand it over, I can be on my way."

"Where do you figure on starting, sir?" Lowndes was curious.

"Why," Reggie was thoroughly excited by his brilliant plan, now, "I'll pop back right to the nub of the trouble, old boy. I'll hie myself back to the era in which Colonel Horatio Vanderveer, invaluable aide to Wellington, was in flower!"

Reggie pounded a fist into his palm. "Damn, Lowndes, it's an excellent idea, eh?"

"Doctor Lowndes," the butler reproved him, "Doctor Lowndes, sir." Then, admiringly: "It is an excellent plan, sir, extraordinarily so."

"Napoleon Bonaparte's era!" Reggie rubbed his hands enthusiastically at the thought. "Wow, this is going to be festive Lowndes, strictly festive!"

Lowndes essayed something that came fairly close to a smile. Then he unstrapped his time machine from his wrist, handing it over to Reggie. As the young man listened intently, Lowndes then went into a detailed explanation of the gadget's workings. This done, he strapped the time machine to Reggie's wrist and set the dial on it.

"It's all fixed to take me to where I want to go?" Reggie demanded.

"Absolutely, sir. The exact year, and time of year. I wish I could go along with you, sir. But the machine is too small to transport more than one person. Good luck, sir!"

Reggie gripped Lowndes hand.

"I shan't return, old boy, until I have thoroughly made a mess of history. I shall, in a sense, be the chap who will cut down the Vanderveer family tree!"

"Press the button, sir, and you'll be on the way," Lowndes directed.

"What ho, Lowndes," Reggie said, his finger finding the button. "If Miss Vanderveer asks for me, tell her I have a luncheon engagement with the Duke of Wellington. Pip, pip!"

And Reggie pressed the button . . .

## CHAPTER II

### Reggie Gets a Uniform

REGGIE experienced, then, for a timeless interval the sensation a person might enjoy during a drop from the top of the Empire State building. A roaring river of sound thundered by his ears, blanketing all his senses by its very immensity. Blackness surrounded him on every side as he plummeted down and down and down.

Dizziness assailed him. The blackness began to dissolve into spinning multi-colored discs that were laced with flickering streaks of light. This kaleidoscopic phenomenon was the last straw. With a sigh Reggie's puzzled brain gave up the battle and slipped gratefully into the irresponsibility of oblivion . . .

The next sensation he experienced was one of delightful buoyancy and softness. It was as if he were floating on fleecy, downy clouds. His taut muscles relaxed and he breathed a sigh of pure relief and sheer animal comfort.

Then he opened his eyes. For an instant he blinked unbelievably and then he sat up. He shook his head groggily and his mouth dropped open and stayed there. There was a roaring in his ears.

Now Reggie was conscious of two things. First of all, the roaring in his ears had ceased and sunlight was shining. Secondly he was standing on a dusty, clay banked road, somewhere on a countryside. And if Lowndes' calculations in setting the time machine had been correct, he was undoubtedly in France, in the year 1815, and somewhere in the vicinity of the Battle of Waterloo.

Reggie took a deep breath as he looked around.

"So this is France," he said aloud. And then, quite suddenly, his stomach seemed to be filled with butterflies. He felt much like a self-conscious valedictorian at a high school graduation who suddenly realizes the enormity of the audience facing him, and the monstrosity of the task that lies ahead of him.

Casually deciding to change history, matter-of-factly deciding to whip back over a hundred years in time while casually sipping a scotch and soda in the year 1941, was one thing; actually getting yourself out on a limb and having to *do* what you'd planned, was another.

But Reggie had no further time for stage fright, for at that instant the silence was broken by a squeaking of wagon wheels and a clumping of hoofs off down the road on which he stood.

Wheeling, Reggie saw an ancient haycart, pulled by two white work horses and driven by and old farmer, approaching leisurely.

"HMMMMMMMM," mused Reggie, "here's where I get a lift and some very valuable information." And then, for the first time, Reggie realized that he was still clad in the same garments he'd been wearing when he left the library of the Vanderveer manor. His dress, he knew, would definitely be odd in this historical background. However, he shrugged the problem off. He might

easily pass as a juggler, an acrobat, or perhaps a vaudeville actor.

"Going my way, old man?" Reggie addressed the old farmer who sat looking quizzically down at him.

"*Oui, monsieur*," the old man said from atop his perch. "Climb on." He seemed polite enough not to mention Reggie's odd clothing. In a moment Reggie had climbed up beside the farmer, and the haycart lurched into forward motion once more.

REGGIE looked upward. He had heard the sudden, ominous guttural noise of thunder.

"Are we in for some rain?"

The farmer shook his head sadly.

"Then what do you call that?" Reggie demanded.

"Monsieur, those are not the rumblings of thunder. Those are the Emperor's cannon."

Reggie gulped. Momentarily he had forgotten where he was and why. Lowndes' calculations had been correct—the cannon of the Emperor, of Napoleon, meant that he was within earshot of the battle of Waterloo!

But he had to make sure.

"Waterloo?" he asked shakily. "I mean, is that noise coming from Waterloo, where Napoleon is holding out?"

The old farmer nodded.

"This is a great day for France," he said. "Or a sad day. We will not know which, until the battle is concluded."

Reggie looked curiously at him.

"You are quite a linguist," he said. "It is rather strange to find a French farmer who can speak English."

The old man glared at him.

"Monsieur, are you mad?" he asked blackly. "I have spoken no word of English. I know not a word of the *cochon* tongue!"

"Uck!" Reggie gulped, and ran a

finger under his collar. "Not a word . . ."

Absolutely, this was a problem for Lowndes—Doctor Lowndes—to answer! Until he could ask that gentleman of science, he would forget it. Which he did. He had other business to think of.

Suddenly Reggie snapped his fingers. It came upon him in a sudden Dawning of Light that, if he were to jump into the stream of history—so to speak—and do something about changing the course of events at Waterloo this day, he would have to work fast, and plenty so.

Reggie frowned.

"How far are we from the battle ground?"

The old man squinted into the sun.

"About an hour's fast gallop on horseback, monsieur."

"Where can I get one?"

The old fellow was clearly perplexed.

"Get one? Get what, sire?"

"A steed, a nag, a stallion, a bangtail—horse to you." Reggie was growing excited.

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"Horses which one could mount are scarce around here. The Emperor's army has appropriated most of them."

Reggie's jaws clamped shut. This was a fine mess. He couldn't miss this chance. But he would, if he were too late for the battle. Then he cocked his head to one side suddenly.

"What's that I hear, old boy? Sounds like your rear wheel is working loose!"

The French farmer looked immediately concerned.

"Better climb out and have a look at it, old boy. Wouldn't want it to fall off, would you?" Reggie kept his voice casual.

"No, monsieur," said the old fellow, halting his horses and rising in the seat

of his cart. "No, I would not like that to happen."

As Reggie sat there looking innocently and blandly at the reins so carelessly tossed beside him the old fellow clambered from his cart and went around to the rear. He must have been just bending down to inspect the rear wheel when Reggie suddenly came alive, grabbing the reins and shouting a loud: "Gidyap!"

The cart lurched suddenly forward as the heavy horses responded instantly to the flicking whip that Reggie slashed down on their rumps. And as the horses dashed madly ahead, pulling Reggie and the cart behind them, the old man's shouting could be heard faintly in the background. . . .

THE horses were just about spent, white with lather and breathing gaspingly through foam flecked lips, and the cart was practically bounced into five or six pieces, when Reggie thundered up to the first straggling line of French troops on the roadways.

The cannons' thunder had been growing louder and louder as Reggie had jounced along the rutted clay roadways. And now he could hear intermittent volleys of rifle fire, louder and more prolonged.

The troops straggling along the road were, for the most part, returning to the scene of combat. Many of them, from their appearances, had left the battle only long enough to have their wounds dressed and were now returning to the fray. None of them seemed tremendously enthusiastic, and Reggie suspected that things were not looking rosy for one N. Bonaparte.

It was while Reggie was flaying the remaining segments of hide from his already exhausted work horses that he suddenly realized he would have to get a change of clothes before he could

safely take to the battlefield. In addition to the fact that his garments were most inappropriate it was also very important—considering the plan he had in mind—to get himself a uniform of some sort.

Seconds later, he saw what he wanted. The spread tents of an army camped some four miles off along a narrow side road. He could get a uniform there, he was certain.

Reggie lashed the weary animals down the side road, galloping frenziedly along and through several sentry posts who fired wildly in their efforts to stop him. From the uniforms of the sentries Reggie suspected that they were a division of Wellington's troops for they were dressed quite differently from the French soldiers he had seen.

This was even more luck than Reggie had hoped for, since an English uniform would serve his plan even better.

His jaunt off onto the side road had again taken him away from the immediate vicinity of the battle and now the sounds of cannon and musket were muffled to an almost inaudible murmur. Reggie slowed his galloping nags to a halt, for the camp was now only a few hundred yards away and got down from the cart.

There were trees lining the roadway, and Reggie kept close to these as he approached the camp stealthily. The English troops weren't going to like what he would do—for it was going to lead to a complete reversal of the Battle of Waterloo.

At last Reggie crouched in some shrubbery at the edge of the encampment. A large tent, ornately beflagged and standing apart from the rest, caught his eye immediately. It was obviously the staff headquarters of a general.

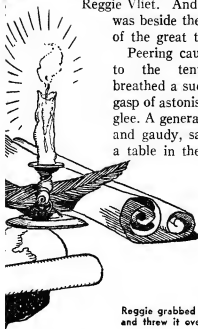
Reggie worked frantically uprooting





a section of shrubbery, and when he had it loose from the ground at last, he used it as a movable camouflage, inching across the open stretch that lay between him and the great tent. Soldiers, hurrying about, paid scant attention to the moving shrub which was Reggie Vliet. And finally, he was beside the rear flaps of the great tent.

Peering cautiously into the tent, Reggie breathed a sudden sharp gasp of astonishment and glee. A general, spangled and gaudy, sat alone at a table in the center of



Reggie grabbed a heavy cloak and threw it over the general

the tent pouring over maps!

REGGIE took a deep and tremulous breath. A *general*! He'd expected to deal with an ordinary private, perhaps a corporal, or possibly a lieutenant—but a general! And then Reggie steeled himself. A general's uniform would be even better than any other military regalia he could don. It would suit his purposes perfectly.

So far, the warrior in the tent hadn't noticed his presence. And so far, no one on the camping grounds had seen Reggie's stealthy approach on their leader's tent. But he would have to act swiftly. He entered the tent.

Reggie moved softly coming up on the General from behind. As he drew closer to the general, who was oblivious to all but the maps over which he hunched his great shoulders, Reggie picked up a heavy overcoat from a cot.

With one swift spring, Reggie leaped forward, enshrouding the startled military dignitary in the vast folds of the coat. The gurgling cries of the general were well muffled by the thickness of the garment as Reggie squeezed inward.

Reggie's next move was to relieve the general of his side arms.

This being done, he was able to remove the overcoat from the general's head and step back, carefully pointing a heavy pistol at that military gentleman's skull.

"Not a peep out of you, old boy. This is serious, understand?" Reggie's words came hissed, and made him feel quite triumphantly dramatic. The general, being wise, shut his jaw firmly at the sight of the menacing pistol. He

seemed, now that his shock was over, to be quite willing to comply with Reggie's every wish, rather than get plugged in the center of the skull.

"You will remove your uniform," Reggie directed, waving the pistol ever so slightly. The red face of the general grew lobster crimson, and his veins turned to bulging purple cords in his forehead. Obviously the suggestion had pricked his dignity.

But Reggie waved the pistol again ever so slightly.

It was obvious that the mad gleam in the eyes of the young man in the masquerade suit was dangerous. So the general grudgingly did as he was told. In a moment he stood shivering before Reggie in—of all things—long red flannel underwear!

Reggie restrained the guffaws he felt like unloosing. It was delightful to realize that he was controlling history by the mere wave of a gun. He wished for one delicious instant that Sandra were here beside him, so that she could see the sort of stuff he, Reggie Vliet, was made of. But then grim purpose returned to him, and he realized he didn't dare tarry here any longer. He had a battle to win for Napoleon and this disrobing of a British general was part of his plan. Time was still essential.

**HOLDING** the pistol clumsily, Reggie managed to remove his toga and don the general's uniform without deflecting the point of the weapon from the fellow's skull. This done, he grabbed the general's tri-cornered hat, popped it jauntily on his head, and grinned.

"Well, old boy, old Son-of-Wars-and-Thunder, I'll be toddling along now. I have a battle to win and a bit of history that needs changing. Wish you could come with me, old chap. So sorry!"

The expression on the face of the be-underwared general had changed sharply. Changed to a look of infinite mortification; utter, naked shame. His voice, husky and trembling, gave Reggie further surprise.

"Please" the general pleaded. "Please. Do with me what you will, but give me back my uniform. The disgrace, the utter shame, the horrible embarrassment, it will—"

Reggie laughed quietly, but with vast pleasure.

"Exactly, old-boy. Perhaps it will keep you confined to your tent, eh? Perhaps it might be wise to save embarrassment and climb under the blankets on your cot."

Like a whipped and beaten thing, the general darted to his cot hurling himself on it and pulling heavy blankets up to his neck. There he remained, while Reggie looked on grinning.

"If I am ever able to find you again," breathed the crimson-faced general, "I will kill you for this!"

Reggie laughed once more, and stepped outside, resplendent in his spangled general's uniform, closing the tent flaps behind him. He felt certain that there would be no sounding of any alarm. Not at any rate, until the general found something to cover up his red flannel underwear.

There was a horse tethered just outside the general's tent. A huge, magnificent, all-white animal—the general's mount. Reggie saw a soldier approaching him hurriedly, and just as hurriedly he leaped to the horse, climbing into the saddle.

"General," the soldier shouted. "The time has arrived. The message has come. We are ready to follow you!"

Reggie wheeled his great animal, reaching down and plucking an envelope from the hand of the excited or-



derly.

"Stay as you are until my return!" he commanded the orderly. "Say nothing of this to anyone. I'll be back!" And he took care to keep his face well hidden in the large collar of the general's tunic. Then he raked the sides of his mount with the sharp spurs he was now wearing.

Reggie galloped off in a cloud of dust . . .

THE sounds of battle pounded furiously in Reggie's ears, and the rhythm of the hoofbeats of his mighty steed was music as Reggie thundered up to the battlefield of Waterloo a half-hour later. As he rode, he had mapped out his plans in the last detail. The plans that were to save the day for Napoleon Bonaparte.

It would be simple, for Reggie remembered something of his high-school history, something of what had happened at Waterloo. Excitement pounded in Reggie's temples, for at last he was really accomplishing what he had set out to do. At last he would win, for once and for all the hand of Sandra Vanderveer.

The cannon thunder was terrific, and on every side of him Reggie saw men fighting, riding, charging, and dying. Bugle notes split the welter of sound occasionally, summoning fresh waves of fighting troops which met in the center of the melee, locked in death grips. On a tiny knoll, about a hundred yards from Reggie, a small band of officers were gathered, standing respectfully behind a short, dynamic figure in a wide flaring cape—Napoleon Bonaparte!

Bullets were zinging by Reggie's ears now, and he bent low over the neck of his charging mount, not quite certain as to who was shooting at him, but well aware that he presented a tempting target.

Seventy thousand Frenchmen were fighting against an equal number of English, fighting to change the destiny of the world. And Reggie gave his plan one last thought as he spurred his horse through the milling ranks of combatants. The whole scheme depended on a ditch.

For Reggie remembered that it had been a ditch, a sunken road, into which unsuspecting French cavalry fell when making a last and decisive charge against the English, that had turned the tide at Waterloo. Turned the tide in favor of Wellington's forces.

Reggie's plan was simple. In his English general's costume, mounted as he was on a great white steed, he could marshal the troops of Wellington into a charge *before* the French cavalry went into action. He could get enough of them into the charge, at any rate, to fill up that sunken road with the bodies of English rather than French soldiers. Then the French would be able to ride the ghastly span and defeat the English, rather than vice versa, as it had been.

Of course there was another point, but Reggie had taken it into consideration also. The second element that defeated the French at this historic battle had been the failure of a division of French reserves to arrive on the scene at the right moment. But Reggie had shrewdly taken into consideration the fact that the English who would now fall into the ditch would compensate for the lack of French reserves. And the French cavalry would then do the rest.

Reggie Vliet's jaw was grim, purposeful, and he wheeled his steed in the direction toward which the dynamic figure on the knoll was facing. Over there, he knew, on the opposite side, would be the soldiers of Wellington. The men milling around him were—

and suddenly Reggie's jaw fell slack and he gulped hastily. *He was on the French side of the battle field*, and it had never occurred to him until this instant!

Milling around on a white horse in the uniform of an English general. Nonchalantly dashing through hordes of fighting Frenchmen!

REGGIE shut his eyes tight, and wondered frantically why someone hadn't shot him down by now, or dragged him captive from his horse. He dug his spurs in deeper, urging his mount on, praying that his luck would hold, praying that the French wouldn't realize they had an English general in their midst. Ahead, perhaps two hundred yards, he could see the ditch, the sunken road, that he would have to span to get to the English sides of the lines. He flayed the sides of his horse again.

And then, in the midst of the shouting, shooting and confusion, someone grabbed the halter of his horse. Grabbed tightly, jerking the animal's neck back violently, while rough hands reached up and dragged Reggie down from the saddle. French hands!

"They've got me," Reggie bleated desperately, even as he was being dragged downward. "I'll be shot as an English spy, or something!"

Two French battery gunners were holding Reggie. Their faces and uniforms were blackened by gunpowder and sweat.

"General," cried one, "we cannot permit you to make such an heroic, such a foolish, charge into the midst of our enemy, the English. We will not allow you to sacrifice yourself, Sire!"

Reggie blinked dazedly at them. What was this? French soldiers addressing him as—and then Reggie no-

ticed with a sudden sweeping wave of of horrified despair. Their uniforms were the same as his own! He had taken an unfamiliar French uniform, instead of an English uniform as he had imagined! The general, the fellow he had left back in the tent—the chap who was now cowering in his long underwear—was a Frenchman!

Reggie groaned. Groaned and threw his hands to his face.

"You must go to the rear, General," the French battery gunners begged him. "We will hold off Wellington's charge, Sire, even though we die!"

But Reggie wasn't even listening. Cannons thundered all about him, louder than before. And from the hill where Napoleon stood, the French Old Guard Cavalry swept down in a sudden charge toward the sunken road and the English lines!

Reggie's heart was in his heels, for even as he watched this gallant, reckless charge, he knew that he had failed, that this was the end of the Little Corporal.

An Empire was tumbling about the ears of Reggie Vliet, and there on the other side of the ditch, where Wellington waited with cannon that would wither the gallant French Cavalry, another Empire was being born.

A sudden, awful premonition hit Reggie Vliet. He had not only failed to save the day for Napoleon by filling the ditch, but he had also—

His hand shook as he brought forth the note which the orderly had handed him just as he started from the camp over an hour ago. The note which had been intended for the general.

*"General," the note read. "Bring your reserves to the battle immediately. The time is set, any delay will be fatal. Our Emperor wishes you luck.*

*"General Ney."*

And Reggie realized, now, that it was he who had caused the ultimate, the final, crushing defeat of Napoléon. That it was he who had left the general of the missing reserves crouching almost naked in his tent while France fell because of one man's embarrassment.

"I hope," Reggie told himself, "I'm satisfied." His voice was bitter and filled with self-accusation.

And then, just as Reggie was about to be engulfed in a vast wave of self-pity and terrible remorse, something exploded terrifically less than four yards from where he stood. Instead of the wave of self-pity, Reggie heard thunder in his ears as he was engulfed by a wave of utter, ebon blackness . . .

SOMEONE was sloshing water on his face when Reggie opened his eyes again. The sounds of thundering cannon and crackling rifle fire were gone, but the acrid stench of gunpowder was still in the air, while all around him Reggie could hear voices.

Reggie tried to sit up, but found that his head was much too heavy to lift from the damp ground on which he was lying. Then, the swimming panorama before his eyes stopped swirling long enough for him to bring his surroundings into focus.

It was twilight, Reggie realized, and he was on or somewhere near what had been the battleground of Waterloo. The growing darkness and the trampled ground around him told him these two things. There were other like-uniformed men lying everywhere beside him. Some were on cots, others, like himself, on the cold earth. All were bandaged, and with a start, Reggie realized that his own arm was swathed in a sling.

And then he knew that somehow—possibly by a cannon explosion—he had been knocked out cold, not to mention

injured. Suddenly he was looking up at a face, a kindly sympathetic face. The face belonged to a tall man in a military uniform and, as faces go, looked horsey.

"Where am I?" Reggie addressed the kindly horse-face, drawing on his vast store of original remarks.

"You'll be shipshape presently," said the tall, horse-faced fellow. "Just your arm that got banged a bit, General."

Reggie blinked in amazement. He'd been called "General"! But then he remembered that he'd been dressed in a French general's tunic at the time that everything had blacked out on him.

"Napoleon," Reggie asked hoarsely, "did he, did he—"

The kindly horse-face shook his head.

"Sorry, old boy, but your Emperor took a beating. It's all over for you Frenchmen. Wellington's the cock of the roost."

With a horrible premonition, Reggie began to realize precisely where he was, and precisely what his status amounted to.

"You mean," Reggie gasped, "that you are English? That I'm—"

The horse-face nodded.

"Sorry old boy. You put up a dashed good fight of it, but you are now the prisoner of the King's forces. I imagine your release will be shortly forthcoming, just as soon as prisoners are exchanged."

It came to Reggie, for the first time since regaining consciousness, that he was in a bit of a predicament. He hadn't—quite frankly—intended to stick around for the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat. If the damned cannon hadn't acted up and knocked him out, he would have fled this particular time era by now. But here he was, prisoner of Great Britain. This fact, in itself, was galling enough to Reggie. But even greater and deeper anguish to his soul

was the realization that he had failed, utterly, miserably, in his efforts to alter the course of history and botch up the record of the Vanderveer clan.

For not only had he failed; he had been the cause of history's panning out the way it did. If he'd only left the French general alone, hadn't stolen his uniform, the French reserves would have arrived on the spot in time to gain victory for Napoleon!

Reggie felt sick inside. Unconsciously, he groaned aloud.

"Poor fellow," a voice muttered. "Painful thing, that arm." And Reggie looked up to the voice and remembered that horse-face was still standing over him. Moreover, horse-face was reaching into a little black bag he carried, and pulling forth a bottle containing pills.

"Wait a minute," Reggie bleated quickly. "Put that stuff away, old boy. I feel fine, absolutely. I don't need any pills, any sedative. I've got things to do. All sorts of things. I can't stick around. Much as I'd like to, I can't—Mughulppph!" Reggie's protests were cut short as two soldiers stepped up from nowhere, grabbing his arms and prying open his jaws as horse-face skillfully opened the bottle of pills and popped three or four of them into Reggie's mouth.

"Mughulppph!" Reggie repeated frantically. He was determined not to swallow the pills. Then, quite suddenly, fingers massaged his adam's apple, and, in spite of himself, the pills slidthered down his throat.

For what seemed to be hours after the horse-faced English medico had left him and gone on to other patients, the two soldiers continued to hold Reggie down. And in spite of anything Reggie could do to prevent it, Reggie was aware that he was becoming irresistibly drowsy, drowsy, drowsy . . .

He had a swimming vision of Sandra's face wheeling above his head, while Colonel Vanderveer, Napoleon, Lown-des, and the English medico leered in the whirling background. Then, while a roaring grew in his ears, the faces stopped wheeling and a thick blanket of fog settled down over his brain . . .

### CHAPTER III

#### An Amazing Revelation

REGGIE VLIET opened one eye very slowly. Then, with equal care, he opened the other. He found, much to his amazement, that his head was still on his shoulders, and that the roaring in his ears had ceased completely. Even his arm had stopped throbbing.

While he looked quizzically around him, Reggie realized two things. He was flat on his back on a straw mattress in a small room, and there was the unpleasant aroma of manure all about him.

Reggie looked down at his garments and found that he still wore the now ragged tunic of a French general. Then, unpleasantly, the recollection of the English medico and his remarks about Reggie's being a prisoner, returned to him.

The same deep despair that had assailed Reggie as he lay wounded on the battlefield contemplating Napoleon's defeat and his own stupidity, now flooded briefly back to Reggie, giving him a sickening jolt.

"Oh, lord," Reggie moaned, "I am a benighted ass, nothing more." And for another moment he lay there motionless considering this gloomy self-description. Then, rolling over on the elbow of his uninjured arm, Reggie rose from his straw mat.

"A prisoner of war," Reggie mum-

bled woefully. "What a hell of a note." He sighed. "Trapped back here like a . . . a . . . rat, in a time era that is over a century away from where I want to be." He put his hand over his eyes, as if to shut out the picture.

"Not a chance to get out," he added despairingly, peering through the web-work of his fingers at the securely locked door to his room.

Just to convince himself, he stepped over to this door, tried it. It felt as though it were heavily barred on the outside, budging not an inch behind the pressure he put against it.

"Probably guards out there anyway," Reggie muttered dourly. He turned then, giving his tiny room closer appraisal. His hope that he might have ignored another avenue of escape promptly died on the realization that his stall was without a window. The aroma of manure now seemed overpoweringly oppressive.

Reggie sat down on his cot with heavy, morbid resignation. He was a goner. There was no way out. And at that moment he realized for the first time that this meant he should never see the fair face of Sandra Vanderveer again.

A tear trickled from the corner of Reggie's left eye.

**M**ENTALLY, he was with her in the gardens at the Vanderveer Manor, holding her hand and looking lovingly into her eyes. A sense of nobility was stealing over Reggie, something akin to triumphant sorrow. For this disaster which now engulfed him was caused directly by his efforts to win the hand of the fair Sandra. Somewhat like a knight of Olde, he had gone to battle for his loved one. And now, a prisoner in chains, he was about to die for her.

This glorious picture was somewhat

disrupted by his realization that he wasn't really in chains, and that for all he knew he might not have to die. It was further disrupted by the nasty recollection that his actions had been far from glorious or heroic. He'd been stupid and clownish.

"A benighted ass," he repeated again.

Reggie sighed heavily. There would be no chance now to go on with his plans against the Vanderveer family tree. His campaign had been nipped in the bud. He was a failure, a joke.

Suddenly Reggie sat bolt upright. The furrows in his brow disappeared. The corners of his mouth twitched in a happy smile.

"Why," he snapped his fingers. "I'm not licked, not at all. There's still another era of history in which I can ruin the Vanderveer name. There's the Civil War. I'd planned to go there anyway, after this battle, to make a complete wreck of the Vanderveer family tree. Why, dammit, even if I haven't messed things up for the Napoleonic Vanderveer, I can still raise hell in the era of the Civil War, Sheridan's Ride, Vanderveer!"

He was pacing excitedly back and forth now. Suddenly he stopped, breaking into a heavy chuckling.

"Why," he gasped between chuckles, "here I was moping around about imprisonment, failure, and what have you, and I have only to press a button to get the blazes away from here and into another time era."

Reggie laughed happily.

"A breeze, that's what it'll be," he chortled. "I'm not really locked in here at all. Boy, will they be surprised to find that one of their most prized prisoners has quite mysteriously flown the coop!"

Reggie continued to chuckle fondly at his own stupidity in not remembering his time machine until now. Quite a

joke, that. But what a blessed relief to remember it now. Still smiling, he looked down at his wrist to make the proper adjustments on the machine.

His smile froze at the halfway mark.

His jaw fell slack in stupefied, nauseating horror.

*The time machine was not on his wrist!*

THE shock was far too much for the now watery substance of Reggie Vliet's knees, and slowly they collapsed as he sank to the floor. It was as if every muscle, every fibre, of Reggie's being were immersed in ice water, numbed by the chilling terror of his predicament.

For fully five minutes, Reggie sat there on the floor like a man in a trance. His mouth was foolishly agape, and he opened and closed it wordlessly while the room spun giddily around his head.

Before, when he hadn't had sense enough to remember that escape was instantly attainable in his time machine, Reggie's feelings had been merely those of dull, somewhat hopeless remorse over his imprisonment.

Now, however, since he had realized that escape was a simple matter, the staggering loss of his one means to effect that escape came as a hundred-fold dreadful blow. He felt much like a Bedouin who, having crawled thirst-crazed across an endless desert, comes at last upon the stream he'd seen in the distance—only to find a mirage.

But somehow reason began to return gradually to Reggie Vliet, and with it a sort of strength and newborn determination. At last he managed to pull himself to his feet. He was conscious now of only one motivation, and that was the necessity of getting back his time machine.

"Wait," Reggie muttered, "until I get my hands on the chap who filched

that thing!"

It was obvious that his time machine had been appropriated by one of the soldiers who had held him helpless while the effects of the drugs crept over him. They would be the most likely thieves. Of course, Reggie's jailer could have had a hand in the theft. Or the English commander, perhaps, could have ordered the confiscation of the private effects of all French prisoners.

At any rate, Reggie was now passionately determined to regain his one means of escape from the predicament that engulfed him. He moved to the door of his tiny room and removed one of his boots. Then, with the boot in his hand he began a furious pounding against the door. After a moment he stopped, listening. Then he began pounding again. He stopped once more and listened. A look of grim satisfaction crept over his face. Footsteps could be heard outside, moving to his door.

Reggie stepped back from the door a pace.

There was a rattling of chains. Then heavy bolts were slid away. The door opened inward, while Reggie stood there breathlessly. A head peered in around the door.

A smarter man than Reggie Vliet would have used poisons, or body-changes, or elaborate ruses to escape from a prison. But Reggie Vliet was a simple soul. He raised his heavy boot high, as the head peered into the room, and brought it smashing down mightily upon the exposed surface of said peering head.

The result was simple and satisfying. A soldier—who belonged to the head—toppled face forward and unconscious into Reggie's cell-like little room.

BREATHING heavily now, for he'd put every last ounce of strength into the blow, Reggie bent over the

prostrate form of the English soldier. With typical buoyant optimism, Reggie lifted the fellow's arms and looked swiftly at his wrists. He wore no time machine. Undaunted, Reggie began a through search of his pockets. Still no time machine.

It occurred to Reggie, then, as he looked disgustingly down at the unconscious soldier, that there would be more to this escape business than he had originally planned on. In a short while more soldiers would be popping into his cell to see what had become of their comrade. Reggie realized that he didn't have any ready explanations for them. He realized, too, that his French uniform made him somewhat conspicuous in an English camp.

Two minutes later Reggie buttoned an English uniform over his French general's tunic. The size of the English guard's clothing had forced Reggie to be double clad. Half a minute after that, he was out in the hall. A quick glance up and down the hall showed him that he'd been imprisoned in a rather large stable—which accounted for the unpleasant aroma and the piles of ever-present straw.

He could hear voices, coming from one of the large rooms off the narrow hallway, and while his heart hammered in excitement, he forced himself to stroll nonchalantly in their direction. A soldier passed him before he'd walked fifty feet, and while Reggie held his breath, looked at him casually and moved by. So far so good.

Then Reggie was outside one of the large stable rooms. The one from which he'd heard the babble of voices. There was a certain sound to the voices that rang reminiscently in Reggie's ears. He'd heard men's voices raised in that peculiar pitch in the back of saloons off Broadway.

A wiser man, wearing a stolen uni-

form and stepping into the midst of hordes of men rightfully wearing the same type of uniform he'd stolen, would have been slightly uneasy at moving into such a precarious position. But not Reggie Vliet. One soldier had passed him without any trouble, so the rest of them shouldn't make any difference. Such was his determined calm as he turned off the hallway and stepped into the large stable room where the enlisted men of Wellington's forces had gathered to play cards and roll dice.

Reggie's entrance into the smoke filled, noisy room caused absolutely no furor. Looking around he saw almost a hundred English soldiers sitting or kneeling in large groups around the wooden floor, all intent upon their particular gambling game.

Reggie, however, was not concerned with the men or the games. His one burning curiosity was to see the various objects—loot from the battlegrounds—which were being gambled for by Wellington's forces.

Moving in a studied, leisurely fashion, Reggie went from game to game, casually peering over shoulders in an effort to look over the assembled gadgets piled at the sides of each player. There was a little money in each group, but most of the stakes were comprised of lockets obviously taken from French soldiers, rings, decorations, souvenirs of battle, and miscellaneous odds and ends for which any average soldier has a curious attachment.

Reggie had peered into five games before he saw it. But the minute it caught his eye it was unmistakable—the time machine!

A soldier had it in the pile he knelt beside, along with other baubles, and was busily engaged in dealing out cards to the ten or more other soldiers in the group. They were all completely ab-

sorbed in the pasteboards that fell to each of them; so completely absorbed that Reggie Vliet was able to smile in spite of the frantic hammering of his heart.

REGGIE smiled again, slyly, and edged around toward the soldier who knelt beside the pile on which his time machine reposed. This was going to be so gloriously simple. No one would notice. In another five minutes he'd be off, gone completely, thanks to the precious little wrist watch-ish gadget.

Now Reggie stood behind the possessor of the time machine. Carefully, he looked from one to another of the players, noting that they were—to a man—utterly intent on the cards they sorted. His heart beat a furious tattoo against his chest as he crouched ever so slightly, ever so casually—as though leaning over to get a better view of the game—down toward the pile of baubles on which the time machine rested.

Reggie took one last look around the room, a queasiness suddenly assailing his knees, and let his hand drop on the pile of trinkets. He felt the smooth, familiar surface of the time machine beneath his fingers, and then, quickly, he straightened up, the precious gadget concealed in his hand.

"Blyme—a thief!"

The cry rent the air before Reggie had time to catch his breath, and as he wheeled frightenedly in the direction of the voice a soldier who had been standing less than ten feet behind him was glaring fiercely and pointing an indignant finger in his direction!

Instantly a shocked silence fell over the room. And then the finger-pointing fellow screamed again.

"He stole from the gaming boards, he did!"

The huge roar of rage coming from

every voice in the room shook the very walls of the place. And in that horrible moment while Time seemed to hang breathlessly suspended Reggie felt—beneath the murderous stares of all in the room—very much like a man hurled from the naked comfort of his bathtub out into the whirling traffic of 42nd and Broadway.

Time stopped hanging breathlessly and exploded into an enraged ball, as every last soldier in the room poured in on Reggie. It was with the instincts of the frightened fox that Reggie suddenly bolted toward the door by which he'd entered. Everywhere around him was clamoring confusion. Hands reaching out for him made Reggie glad that he'd played on the scrub team at college. A little snake-hipping threw most of them off. His clothing was torn and ragged by the time he reached the door, and he was certain that the hot breaths of his pursuers were literally scorching the hair from the nape of his neck.

A neatly applied stiff arm dispatched a burly soldier who had just entered the room and tried to stop him at the doorway. Then, with boots clattering furiously in back of him, Reggie was flying down the hallway.

There was a twisting turn at the end of the hall leading off to three separate passages. Reggie hurled himself down the third of these—a darkened hallway that smelled of musty grain bins—and was relieved to hear the footsteps of his pursuers pounding onward through another passageway.

HE WAS breathing heavily, gaspingly, as he leaned against the wall in the darkened passage and began to strap the time machine to his wrist. Then at last it was on, and Reggie peered down at the dial, recalling Lowndes' instructions concerning



the gadget, in order to decide where it should be set.

Visibility was bad. There was a chink on the other side of the passage from which Reggie detected the faintest pinpoint of light emerging. Reggie moved around in a position that would enable him to fix the dial by the light coming from the chink.

Off in the distance, Reggie could still hear the occasional clatter of footsteps as his pursuers continued their search for him. Squinting, he peered again at the dial on his time machine.

And then Reggie heard a voice. It came from behind the chinked partition through which the light was pouring. It was the solemn, grave, ponderous dignity of the voice that made Reggie pause, turn, and put his eye to the chink.

He looked into a comfortable room. A room in which an English colonel sat behind a desk facing a uniformed gentleman whom Reggie judged to be a general. The general was pacing back and forth before the desk, smoking a long pipe.

Reggie suddenly gasped. He recognized the general from pictures he had seen in history books—*Wellington*. And then, his heart almost stopped beating as the colonel at the desk turned so that his face was visible for the first time. It was the face of a Vanderveer, the same damned face that hung in a gold frame above the ornate desk in the library at the Vanderveer manor!

Wellington spoke.

"It is all right, Jacques. There will be no trouble. You will not have to return to France."

Reggie frowned. "Jacques?" He didn't get it. The Vanderveer's name should be Horatio. And France—what would a Vanderveer want to return to France for?

"You will be known henceforth as Colonel Horatio Vanderveer," Wellington said. "England will decorate you for your service to her. There will never be any reference, or any indication, hereafter, that you were once a Frenchman. It is well that you studied in our schools, you speak as we do."

And then Colonel Vanderveer rose, smiling.

"It is good. If it were ever suspected that less than a year ago I was a soldier of France, my reputation might be somewhat tarnished. People have a nasty way of treating those they consider traitorous."

"Perhaps you were a traitor to your own France," Wellington admitted. "But you now have a new country to claim you. And you have done that country a noble service in betraying your former comrades-in-arms. War is a strange game, Colonel."

REGGIE VLIET gasped, gulped, gasped, and fought a fainting spasm. Here, through sheer chance, was a Vanderveer exposed before his very eyes. Here was information that was a hundred million times more precious than what Reggie had originally sought.

It was crystal clear to Reggie now. Horatio Vanderveer was not really a brilliant English hero; rather he was a traitorous Frenchman who had betrayed his own country by going over to the enemy. Then, since he was unwanted by the country he'd betrayed, his name had been anglicised from Jacques to Horatio, his identity given a phony aroma of honor by some decorations from the king!

This, then, was the first of the two staunch pillars of aristocracy claimed by the family Vanderveer. A fake, a fraud! Reggie felt like shouting for joy, dancing wildly up and down. He

had this Vanderveer right where he wanted him. Why, when he got back to old 1941 Colonel Vanderveer, all he'd have to do would be to get a few French history books, and connect the traitor Jacques Vanderveer with the English hero Horatio Vanderveer.

But now Reggie was jubilant. There was still more to do. He felt much like a great general who, after conquering one country, immediately becomes dissatisfied and looks for more territory. Reggie could no more rest on his laurels now than he could fly.

"On to the next Vanderveer," Reggie muttered eagerly. "I'll eat 'em alive."

Then, carefully, he remembered Lowndes' instructions as to the time machine and fixing it for departure from one era to another. He set the mechanism at precisely the same places Lowndes' had told him to, and then, before pressing the button, triumphantly squirmed out of his oversized English uniform.

"Won't need that," he observed. He was still left in his French general's tunic, but about this fact he was cheerfully unconcerned.

"Civil War," Reggie murmured happily, "Make way for the Conquering Vliet! I'm coming a-running."

Triumphantly, Reggie pressed the button.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### To Ride with Sheridan

REGGIE VLIET struggled out of the torrent of blackness that had swept him upward and onward through time. Thunder rang in his aching head and his first horrified thought was that he had gone blind. He scrambled dizzily to his feet and it was with hysterical relief that he realized that it was merely night time.

He was standing on the edge of a brook, he knew, for he could hear its bubbling rippling and he could see a faint glimmer of the moon reflected from its surface. As he gradually began to find his mental bearings again, he was conscious of a vast feeling of satisfaction that was as exhilarating as strong wine. For he realized that he'd knocked one of the strongest legs from beneath old Colonel Vanderveer's claims to ancestral glory. He, Reggie Vliet, knew the full and complete story of the perfidy of one of the hallowed Vanderveer clan. He almost chuckled thinking about it. The great and almighty Vanderveer Hero actually a traitor to the cause! Wait until Vanderveer heard that. He'd have little to say after that about the lack of background in the Vliet menagerie.

These pleasant musings were dissolved by the muffled roar of cannon and the sharp biting crackle of musketry off to his right. Reggie dropped to the ground and listened breathlessly. The sounds subsided after a few minutes and a thick silence settled again on the floor of the forest.

Reggie listened awhile to his thumping heart and then he crawled cautiously to his feet. A glance at his time machine told him that he was smack-dab in the middle of the United States Civil War, and the same time he realized that the battle noises he had just heard were undoubtedly the results of a North-South encounter.

Reggie felt an almost uncontrollable exultation as he realized that he was within inches, so to speak, of his goal. For it was during this era that the illustrious Major Vanderveer had flourished and made ancestral hay for the Vanderveers who followed him. Reggie's jaw tightened grimly. He had already shown up one traitorous Vanderveer, who had been venerated through

the ages as a glorious hero, and he felt just like tackling another. If Major Vanderveer, attached to Sheridan's command wasn't a phony, he'd darn soon make one out of him.

With these optimistic hopes Reggie's brain slipped into high gear. First he would have to contact Sheridan and through him, Major Vanderveer. After he had done that he would figure out something to make a joke or a spectacle out of the pride and joy of the Vanderveer clan. Reggie allowed himself one more fleeting gloat as he thought of the old Colonel Vanderveer's chagrin and consternation at the exposure of his ancestors, and then he banished the thoughts from his mind. Business first—then pleasure . . .

"Major Vanderveer," he said aloud to empty silent woods, "If you haven't got feet of clay you soon will have."

Then, like a thin and frayed ghost, Reggie set out through the black forest. He realized as he trudged along that he was getting hungrier by the minute for it had been, he figured roughly, two hundred years since he'd had a bite. Suddenly his nose twitched. For borne on the cool fresh air was the unmistakable odor of frying bacon!

**W**ARS are not won on empty stomachs so Reggie followed his nose moving along the creek-side in the direction of the tantalizing odors.

He had gone a hundred yards when a sentry suddenly stepped from behind a tree and prodded him sharply in the belly with a bayonet.

"Halt!"

Reggie shot both hands into the air, without argument.

"Who goes theah?" The sentry was little, heavily bearded, with tired red-rimmed eyes. His voice was an unmistakable southern drawl but there was the rasp of steel beneath his soft

tones.

"A-a friend," Reggie said diplomatically. "I'd be awfully obliged if you'd take me to your commander."

"We hain't any commander," the sentry said dubiously, "not near heah we hain't. This heah is an outpost picket camp. Come along and a'll take you to our sergeant."

Reggie nodded appreciatively and moved along in front of the sentry. Now to the odor of frying bacon was added the delightful fragrance of boiling coffee. Then he saw a camp fire through the trees and a few minutes later he was standing in the center of a Confederate picket camp. The men looked curiously at his dusty, frayed French uniform, and then turned non-committally back to their pans of bacon and coarse bread.

The sergeant to whom Reggie explained fast and furiously a few minutes later looked like a dime store edition of General Lee. Big and bearded, but seedy as hell.

"So you see, suh," Reggie concluded breathlessly, "Ah'm really a Confederation boy. Howeveh, suh, if you don't believe me, if y'all think ah'm on the damn Yankee side of the fence, take me to your commander." Reggie was counting on what the sentry had said about there being no commissioned officers nearby.

The sergeant was still dubious. Reggie could see that. But the sergeant was also quite tired, and a little bit don't-give-a-damnish.

"Well," he drawled, scratching his flea-infested beard, "well, suh, ah'll just have to take your word. Sit down with us, suh, and dig in."

Hurling himself ravenously into the bacon and coffee, Reggie thanked history for its famous southern tradition of hospitality. When he had made sufficient pig of himself, he wiped the ba-

con grease from his chin and got down to the matter on hand.

"What damn Yankee troops are on the other side of this creek?" he asked the sergeant.

"Sheridan's," the dime store Lee replied. "Damn Yankees!"

Reggie felt a swift surge of excitement. "Then this is Cedar, I mean, Cedah Creek we're encamped beside?"

The sergeant nodded.

Reggie was now violently excited.

"Take me to your commander, and quick!" he demanded. He was remembering that here, at Cedar Creek, the Confederate general, Early, had staged a to-the-death battle with Sheridan's men. He was remembering, too, that Early's forces had been defeated, and that this battle marked probably the strongest turning point in the Civil War.\*

These things flashed through Reggie's brain like nimble rabbits chasing each other. If—if he could arrange things so that Sheridan would lose this all-important battle, that would mean that Major Vanderveer, attached to Sheridan's command, would be defeated too, and it would ultimately mean that his triumphant position in history would be greatly altered. For losing generals, no matter how gallant, are rarely remembered.

Reggie was trembling with excitement. Here was his chance, his beautiful one-in-a-million chance to blot the fair Vanderveer escutcheon for all time. All he had to do was to, somehow, precipitate a Confederate victory. In the split-second that it took to realize this, Reggie's plan of action was already shaping in his mind.

He would see to it that Sheridan's men were defeated—or bust!

\* Many historians are of the opinion that had General Early's troops been victorious at Cedar Creek, the Confederate army might easily have swept on to ultimate victory.—Ed.

"Sergeant," he cried, "I've got to see your commander. The fate of the Confederacy, of Jeff Davis, of," and here he removed his hat, "General Lee, and the glorious General Early, depends on it."

It was the mention of General Lee that brought a tear to the rheumy eye of the sergeant. He rose to his feet, scratching the last flea from his beard.

"Come along with me, suh," he said huskily.

Reggie rose eagerly and strode after the sergeant. His plan was taking shape . . .

GENERAL EARLY was dressed in dusty gray, and sitting in a mud-splashed tent with several of his staff officers when Reggie, led by the sergeant, was led up to him.

The sergeant saluted and Reggie performed a clumsy imitation.

Early looked quizzically at Reggie's French uniform, but said nothing. The sergeant spoke first.

"This man, General, claims to have some information valuable to the Confederacy. I'll leave you to decide that, suh!" The sergeant saluted, clicked his heels and was gone.

Reggie cleared his throat. Once he had sold window-cleaning fluid to housewives—when he was just out of Princeton—but he knew that this was going to be the biggest and toughest selling job in all his life.

General Early sat there looking at him, quite nonplussed. But Reggie cleared his throat and started in. Perhaps it was the intense earnestness of his expression, or perhaps it was the very astuteness of his plan; at any rate, General Early's face began to register a genuine interest. Moments later Early was nodding with every third phrase Reggie poured forth. Then he pounded a large fist on the table be-

fore him.

"The plan is good," Early admitted. "We've already mapped out an attack, so we can't lose anything by this additional strategy. It all hinges, of course, on your ability to carry out your end of it."

Reggie cleared his throat, threw back his shoulders.

"Just give me a Union uniform, fix up some phony credentials, and give me a horse. I'll see to it that my end of the plan doesn't misfire!"

Early nodded, then, and turned to issue orders to a member of his staff. And Reggie, heart thumping hard against his ribs, thought that for the first time he was nearing the realization of his task. When this was over, he could return to the Present, and Sandra—without the complications of family heritage—would be waiting for him.

Early looked up at Reggie as one of the underofficers returned.

"It's all ready, suh. And good luck to you. Lee and the Confederacy will owe you an everlasting debt, suh, if you are successful." Early held out his hand. Reggie gulped twice and forced a smile of confidence . . .

**R**EGGIE had forded Cedar Creek astride a great gray horse, and was now heading for the camp of the Union forces. He was wearing the uniform of a lieutenant in the cavalry of the Grand Army of the Republic. In his saddle pouch, he carried several excellently forged papers.

A sentry picket of blue uniformed soldiers stopped him at a road several hundred yards from Cedar Creek.

Reggie forced a calmness he didn't feel.

"Take me to General Sheridan," he told the picket. "I have a dispatch from headquarters." The Union sol-

diers looked doubtful, and Reggie had an unpleasant vision of himself dangling from a noose end, or standing before a firing squad. He produced his papers, and while they were inspected, resisted a wild desire to gallop the hell away from there.

"Can't leave our picket," one of the boys in blue said at last, handing the papers back to Reggie. "But you'll find Sheridan stopping over in Winchester, about thirty miles down the road. He's jest come back from Washington. If you could wait at our general encampment about a mile from the road fork, he'd be a-coming in about ten hours."

Reggie stuffed the papers carefully back into his saddle pouch. Then he dug his spurs into the flanks of his great gray mount, and the animal lurched into stride.

"Can't wait," Reggie shouted back over his shoulder. "This is urgent!" And then to himself, he added: "And how!"

Reggie bent low over the neck of his horse, letting the animal have its head. He was riding hell for leather—toward Winchester . . .

**I**N SOMETHING around three hours later, Reginald Randhope, clinging to the reins for dear life, galloped into Winchester. And in less than five minutes he had reined up in front of the encampment to which he had been directed. General Sheridan was there, moustached and dashing, the picture of devil-may-care gallantry. And he looked quizzically at Reggie as he stumbled up to him and saluted.

It took Reggie several seconds to get his breath. Then he said:

"I come from Headquarters, General. I'm to accompany you, according to orders, to the end of the town. You're needed badly back at Washington, sir."

Sheridan's frown was dark, and he grabbed the papers from Reggie's shaking hand. After scrutinizing them for several minutes, he turned to an aide standing behind him.

"There's been a change of plan," he snapped. "They want me back at Washington. Muster out the troops, have 'em ready in five minutes. We're riding back."

General Sheridan turned then and peered closely at Reggie. His eyes traveled in keen scrutiny over the French uniform that Reggie was wearing.

"Are you," he asked, "by any chance a relation to our Major Vanderveer?"

Reggie swallowed nervously. This was ticklish going, he thought.

"N—no," he stammered, "I'm not. None at all."

General Sheridan wrinkled his brow and shook his head thoughtfully.

"Amazing likeness," he muttered, half to himself. He turned slowly, but stopped and peered at Reggie again.

Reggie wondered with rising hysteria what was wrong. He squared his shoulders, straightened his uniform automatically.

"I get it," General Sheridan cried suddenly. He grabbed Reggie's hand abruptly and crushed it between his own two big ones. "I understand perfectly," he said warmly. "We can't ever repay your family for all the assistance they've given us. You had me a bit puzzled until I noticed your uniform. Good luck."

With this the general wheeled and strode away. Reggie scratched his head in bewilderment. Was the general going loony? Reggie shrugged helplessly. It didn't really matter. With Sheridan and his men out of the way it would be a great Confederate victory. He looked about the encampment and saw men saddling and mounting their tough,

wiry cavalry horses. Sheridan's command was ready to march—in the wrong direction. Reggie peered closely at the heavily bearded faces of the Union soldiers, trying to pick Major Vanderveer out of the pack. He wanted to see the chap once before he departed with General Sheridan and his men to historical oblivion. The door behind him was suddenly thrown open and a lithe, muscular figure, dressed in an unfamiliar uniform hurried by him and climbed to the saddle of a near-by horse.

Reggie choked back a gasp of surprise as the horse wheeled and its rider's face was visible. He was too shocked to move or speak, all he could do was stare in dazed bewilderment—at the *spitting, mirror-like image of himself, Reggie Vliet!*

The image of himself on the horse stared at him in equal astonishment and then, as a shouted command echoed through the air, he wheeled his horse, and with a last look over his shoulder at Reggie's open-mouthed figure, he dashed away.

Reggie shook his head unbelievably. The likeness was too exact to be possible. The man's bearing and features and expressions were the exact duplicates of Reggie Vliet. It was incredible. Like looking in a mirror and seeing yourself in different clothes performing different actions. Reggie came out of his dazed fog as he became aware of the presence of a grizzled veteran standing next to him.

Reggie grasped the man's arm excitedly.

"That fellow who just rode off," he said quickly, "Who was he?"

The veteran spat a huge quid onto the ground before replying. "Him?" he said querulously, "Thought everybody knew him. He's the Frenchie, Major Vanderveer!"

## CHAPTER V

### A Change in Plans

REGGIE digested this in stunned silence. He opened and closed his mouth foolishly. It was strangely disturbing news. It was more than that. It was deuced astonishing. His reason told him that it was merely a coincidence, but his instinct was telling him otherwise.

Major Vanderveer, the man he was going to discredit, was his own spitting image. That much he could appreciate. But his conscience was pricking him at the thought of sabotaging, as it were, this chap who looked enough like him to be his twin. It was like cutting off his nose to spite his face—or something.

It was while he was brooding over these confusing thoughts, that a voice behind him said:

"Here's an important dispatch for you, Major Vanderveer. Lucky I caught you before you rode off with General Sheridan."

Reggie turned guiltily and saw a dusty, tired looking dispatch rider, standing next to a lathered horse. The dispatch rider, a slim youthful chap, was holding a leather-covered roll of paper toward him.

Reggie knew a painful moment of indecision. The dispatch rider had obviously mistaken him for Major Vanderveer. If he took the message he might be embroiling himself in some sort of intrigue or trouble. If he didn't take it, the dispatch rider might become suspicious, do a little investigating, and the soup would soon be in the fire.

Reggie took the dispatch.

He opened it after the rider had saluted and led his tired horse away. Enclosed in the leather roll was a letter addressed to Major Vanderveer, attached to Sheridan's command. There

were only a few lines to the letter and Reggie read them quickly. When he had finished, he replaced the letter in the leather roll and placed it in his pocket. His hands were trembling with excitement. The information in that letter had hit him with force of a bombshell. It was an astounding, an amazing revelation, but its authenticity was beyond question.

For minutes Reggie Vliet remained rooted to the spot, his brain churning madly with a dozen problems and complications. Then as the shock wore off, he realized with frantic desperation, that action, immediately vigorous action, was demanded of him. He had to ride after General Sheridan, stop him and send him back to meet the Confederate forces at Cedar creek. For it was of the most vital importance that the Confederate forces be defeated. They *had* to be defeated. And Sheridan and his men *must* share in the glory. That was imperative, too.

Reggie wheeled and raced for a horse . . .

REGGIE caught up with the rear guard of Sheridan's forces in a little less than an hour. And in exactly three minutes of hard riding, Reggie finally drew up to the head of the column and alongside of Sheridan and his twin, Major Vanderveer.

"G-g-g-g-g-generrrrrral!" Reggie blurted from his jogging mount. "T-t-t-thhhhhhheee Reb-b-b-ellls have struck at Ced-d-d-dar Creek!"

General Sheridan instantly threw up his hand, and far down the road the entire column came to a halt.

"What's that you say?" he demanded.

Breathlessly, Reggie explained. But all Sheridan wanted was the synopsis of what had happened. And now fire danced in his Irish eyes, and his hand-

some jaw was set. He wheeled his mount—his famous black charger. To his fellow officers and Reggie, he bellowed:

"Ride, soldiers, we're going back!"

The next four hours were a breathless nightmare of anxiety of Reginald Randhope. Never had he been swept along on the crest of greater excitement, and confusion. Thundering wildly through Winchester, Sheridan and his men swept down the road to Cedar Creek, passing the straggling remnants of a retreating Union army.

Reggie, up in the fore, found his own steed matching Sheridan's black charger stride for stride, mile for mile. On the other side of Sheridan, raced major Vanderveer, saber in hand, shouting lusty encouragement to the Union forces.

Louder, louder, grew the thundering of cannon and the salvo of scattered Union rifles. Sheridan had drawn his gleaming saber, now, and he held it high. Imitating the gesture, Reggie, too, swung a sword wildly above his head.

And then, led by their gallant leader, Sheridan, the Union forces on the roadway turned back toward Cedar Creek, strengthened in courage and determination.

The infantrymen were singing wildly, and Reggie heard their voices above the pounding of gunfire. "The Battle Hymn Of The Republic" was the tune those voices bellowed, and tiny icicles of pride and excitement trickled down Reggie's spine.

Irresistibly, the dashing cavalry leader swept onward, and irresistibly, the infantrymen behind them followed up the charge. They were in the thick of the confused and shaken Confederate soldiers, now. Soldiers who had found sure victory was turning into certain death and defeat.

Reggie felt no sense of danger. He didn't give a damn if a cannon ball hit him in the midriff. He felt as though he could hurl it back smoking. This was a new Reginald Vliet, a Vliet inspired by the very strength of the comrades who rode beside him.

And in one vast rolling wave, the Union forces swept over the field of battle. The Confederates now were frankly routed, and any semblance of order that they had previously had was shattered. Gray clad rebels ran for safety, and those who stayed to fight fell beneath the thundering hoofs of Sheridan's cavalry and the bullets of Union infantry.

Bugles trumpeted wild retreat, and answering bugles screamed attack. And somehow, through all this, Reggie Randhope kept his saddle. Kept his saddle alongside General Sheridan and these newfound comrades.

AT last it was over. Infantrymen, still poured onto the scene, mopping up the last resistance of the boys in gray. Sheridan, still at the head of his men, slowed his gallant column to a trot.

His eyes were shining, and there were tears in them as he gazed down from his black charger at the sprawling bodies of boys in blue and gray. For Sheridan was a soldier.

And then General Sheridan's black charger was beside Reggie's weary gray horse, and he extended a gauntleted hand.

"Fine riding, Lieutenant," Sheridan said.

Reggie choked up and couldn't reply. Then Sheridan moved off, and Major Vanderveer, the amazing image of Reggie Vliet, jogged up beside Reggie.

"I say," he said, with a puzzled frown, "we resemble each other a good deal y'know. I don't believe I know



you but I feel, somehow, as if I should."

Reggie grinned broadly. "You should," he said lightly. He patted the precious leather packet nestling inside his jacket. The packet containing the all-important letter. "If I told you the whole story," he said to the puzzled Vanderveer, "you'd think I was as nutty as a fruit cake, so I won't try."

Still grinning, Reggie reined his horse away from the battle scene, and dismounted. He felt as buoyant and giddy as a school-girl. Success, complete and exhilarating, was within his reach. Everything he had set out to accomplish had been handled with dash and eclat. He felt once again of the leather packet within his jacket and then squared his shoulders.

"Vanderveer you damned old goat, put up your hands—here I come!"

And with a vast sense of accomplishment, an overpowering feeling of confidence Reggie Vliet reached down to adjust the dial on the wrist-watchish time machine.

Smilingly, he waited for the old familiar sensation of blackness to assail him. It would be great to get back. And it would be even greater to stay there—for good, and with Sandra.

He wondered vaguely how long he would have been gone by the time he returned. Wondered and then realized that barely five or six minutes would have elapsed. Maybe less.

"Pip pip!" said Reggie.

Nothing happened. And with a horrible dropping sensation in the pit of his stomach, Reggie realized that almost a minute had elapsed while he'd been sitting atop his horse, waiting to be returned to the Present.

And still nothing happened.

The smile slid from Reggie's face. Frantically, now, he raised his wrist to his ear. The watch-like time machine was silent.

It was supposed to tick. All the time. But it was silent.

Sweat in great rivers, broke out all over Reggie Randhope. He shook his wrist. Then put his ear to the watch.

It was still silent.

"Oh my God!" Reggie bleated. "I'm trapped!"

Reggie didn't hear the sudden thunder of a cannon to his left. A cannon discharged by Union soldiers in celebration of the victory. He was too stupefied, too frozen, by the horror of his situation. His heart had turned to ice.

But Reggie's startled gray horse had heard the cannon. Heard, and leaped madly, bucking Reggie's startled figure to the ground. Then it was galloping wildly away, while the still terror-stricken Reggie watched it go.

Despairingly, automatically, Reggie put the watch to his ear.

"Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick!"

The jar to earth had started the thing working again.

Reggie felt like screaming his joy and hysterical relief as the old sensation of blackness closed in around him . . .

## CHAPTER VI

### A Vanderveer—And a Vliet!

REGGIE completed the trip from the Civil War to the Present in what he considered to be jig time. The whirling, rushing blackness enveloped him, it seemed, but for an instant, and then he opened his eyes to behold the familiar surroundings of the Vanderveer library.

Memory swept over him in an electrifying wave. He was back in the present with all of the evidence and information necessary to completely blast Colonel Vanderveer's idolatry of his ancestors. One Vanderveer an out-and-out fraud, a traitor and villain of

the first water, and the second illustrious Vanderveer—he felt carefully of the rolled leather packet in his breast pocket and chuckled triumphantly. It would be worth one million dollars to see the old goat's face when he learned that—

"Pardon sir," Lowndes' suave voice interrupted his thoughts, "but I see you're back."

Reggie looked up at Lowndes and smiled.

"You bet," he said happily. "Your time thingumajig worked like a charm." He unstrapped it and handed it to him. "Be a good chap now and get me a change of clothes. I've got a lot to talk over with a certain opinionated old goat and I'll feel better when I climb out of this uniform."

**T**WENTY minutes later Reggie slipped into a well-tailored tweed coat and stared at himself in the mirror. Then he slipped the leather packet from his pocket and, with it gripped firmly in his hand, he strode through the doorway and down the carpeted stairway that led to old Vanderveer's study.

But as he passed the staircase that led to the upper floors of the house, he looked up and saw Sandra descending. Sandra looking sad and wan, but still the blue-eyed apple of his eye.

"Darling," he cried.

She turned to his voice, her face lighting like a Christmas tree.

"Reggie," she exclaimed. Then she was running down the steps and the next instant his arms were around her. "I'm so upset," she sobbed, "we can't get married unless father changes his mind."

"He'll do that," Reggie promised grimly. "I'm going to give that fire-eating father of yours his last chance to give us his blessing. Come along my dear. Chin up."

"Oh Reggie," she cried, her eyes shining, "you're wonderful."

Reggie took her by the arm.

"You're probably right," he said modestly. "It's a pity, though, that your father doesn't quite share your opinion."

Then they were standing before the oak-paneled door that led to the lair of Colonel Vanderveer. Reggie squared his shoulder and shoved the door open and marched into the Vanderveer study.

The Old Goat was seated behind his massive desk thumbing through a thick copy of **ARISTOCRACY OF AF-GHANISTAN**, or **BLUE-BLOODS OF THE BUSH**.

He looked up as the door banged and then he coughed.

A rumbling, ominous cough. His eyes lighted with the recognition of a man renewing acquaintance with a water moccasin. He opened his mouth and four flabby chins shook angrily.

But Reggie beat him to the punch.

"Now listen to me, sir," he said grimly. "I intend to marry your daughter and you and your entire gallery of sour-pussed ancestors can be hanged."

Colonel Vanderveer eyed him with cold dislike.

"A Vanderveer marry one of your stripe?" he snorted decisively. "You must be mad. I've given you my decision and it's final."

With calculated deliberation Reggie drew the carefully-wrapped letter from his pocket. Without answering Colonel Vanderveer's blast, without so much as looking at him, he proceeded to slowly unwrap the leather wrappings, until the letter, now wrinkled and yellowed with age, was in his hand.

"This," he said, with diabolic deliberation, "might be of interest to you, Colonel Vanderveer. It is a letter to Major Vanderveer of the Union forces. It is from a fairly well known gentleman of

that time. Shall I read it to you?"

Colonel Vanderveer was trying unsuccessfully to restrain his curiosity.

"G—go ahead," he said breathlessly, "Major Lucius Vanderveer is one of our proudest ancestors. A nobleman, a gentleman, a true blue-blood of the first water."

Sandra Vanderveer was looking at Reggie in undisguised admiration.

"Where did you find it?" she asked happily. "You really are so terribly smart at times, Reggie."

"Oh just around in — in a nook," Reggie answered non-committally. "Now I'll read this letter. It's addressed to Major Lucius Vanderveer, attached to the command of General Philip Sheridan."

"Yes, go on, boy," urged Colonel Vanderveer from the edge of his chair.

"My dear Reginald," Reggie began loudly and distinctly.

"**H**ERE!" Colonel Vanderveer cried testily. "You said the letter was to Lucius. What's the blooming idea of this Reginald?"

"Will you permit me to continue?" Reggie asked with all the aloof dignity he could muster.

Colonel Vanderveer subsided scratching his head perplexedly.

"My dear Reginald," Reggie began again. "There are not words to express this country's fervent gratitude to you for your gallant services in her behalf." Reggie paused, and then spoke the next sentence emphatically. "The Vliets of France should well be proud of you for your efforts in behalf of Liberty and Union."

Reggie rushed on before Colonel Vanderveer could interrupt.

"The name of Vanderveer which you have been forced to assume because of possible international complications has been honored excessively by your cour-

age and idealism. But it is my stern duty to ask a still greater favor of you. It is my wish that you renounce your family name of Vliet and legally adopt the name of Vanderveer to circumvent the possibility of our foes learning that you have aided us.

"You are well aware what that might mean on the troubled international front. I am sure that one who has suffered and sacrificed as you have for our cause will not hesitate to make this last and most heart-felt sacrifice of an honored and distinguished family name. Trusting that you will grant me this last favor, I salute you for the last time as Reginald Vliet, and greet you for the first time as Lucius Vanderveer."

"Preposterous!" snorted Old Vanderveer. "Expect me to believe that our noblest forbear was a Vliet, one of your people. Rot! Absolutely tommyrot!"

Reggie smiled.

"The paper and ink are genuine, the seals are authentic. It is, I am happy to say, the absolute and unimpeachable truth."

Beads of perspiration were standing out on Colonel Vanderveer's forehead. Reggie's casual air of assurance was upsetting him.

"Who's it from?" he asked uneasily.

"A gentleman," Reggie said coolly, "by the name of Abraham Lincoln." He rocked slightly on his heels and hooked both thumbs complacently in his vest holes. "Mr. Lincoln thought a lot of we Vliets. Yes indeed! Thought a powerful lot of us."

"Let me see it," Colonel Vanderveer said hoarsely. "There must be — be some mistake."

Reggie handed him the letter, and put his arm about Sandra's waist. She leaned against him, murmured,

"My but you're wonderful, Reggie."

Reggie nodded happily.

He was thinking of the old goat's

face when he exploded the next bomb-shell in front of him. When he told him of the treachery and perfidy of the French Vanderveer who sold out to Wellington. That ought to be worth watching. The old goat would probably blow his top off proper then. Reggie smiled gloatingly, a delightful anticipation mounting in his veins. With both of the long-renowned Vanderveers consigned to ignominious oblivion, old Colonel Vanderveer would be a sadder but wiser human being.

COLONEL Vanderveer stood up then, pale and shaken.

"It appears to be genuine," he said weakly. "It would seem that the man we have venerated these long years as Major Vanderveer is actually a relative of yours, a Vliet."

Reggie nodded complacently. When he had received the communication from the dispatch rider back in the Civil war, he'd realized that it wouldn't do to make a chump out of his own relative. That was why it had been necessary to race after Sheridan and undo the damage he had done.

"Positively staggering," old Vanderveer said heavily.

"And that isn't all," Reggie said, with poisonous calm. "I have more information for you, Colonel Vanderveer. It seems—"

Colonel Vanderveer waved a hand.

"It must wait," he said, with some of his old fire. "I have something to say to you. Something that you, ahem, might consider in the way of restitution for the use of your name all these years.

"I receive a pension fund in the amount of five thousand pounds each year from the English government. It is given to me from the estate of Colonel Horatio Vanderveer, one of the outstanding English heroes, as you proba-

bly know."

Reggie smiled gloatingly. His time had just about arrived. Let the old bore ramble on and then he'd spring the fact that Colonel Horatio Vanderveer was actually a French traitor and deserter.

"This money," Colonel Vanderveer said pontifically, "I will bequeath to you and Sandra as a wedding present along with my blessings and best wishes for your happiness."

"Oh Daddy!" Sandra cried, hugging him.

Reggie felt as if he would collapse. The old man's capitulation was one amazing thing, but secondly there was the realization that the treachery of Colonel Horatio Vanderveer must continue to remain a dark secret. For Reggie knew that if the old man suspected his great-grandfather's treachery, he would never accept the lush pension from the English government. If he refused it, as he undoubtedly would, where would one Reginald Vliet get off? Probably out in the cold as far as a substantial lump of the stuff was concerned.

Reggie fought a brief battle with his conscience and his conscience lost by a wide margin. Reggie squared his shoulders, and decided to forget forever certain circumstances concerning Colonel Horatio Vanderveer.

"This is wonderful of you, Colo—I mean, Dad," he cried enthusiastically. He took Sandra by the arm. "Come darling," he said masterfully, "I have things to speak to you about. Important things."

They left the room, arm in arm, and Colonel Vanderveer winced as he heard Reggie's clear young tenor voice floating back, singing:

"Oh we cut down the fam-lee treeeee  
"And we hauled it away to the mill."



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# Voyage into the



Robert Fugua

"One passenger!" the sportsman snarled, "and it'll be the girl!"

# LIGHTNING

by ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

**What horror lay beyond this weird lightning,  
and why was it on Earth as well as on Venus?**

**"NO!"** CAPTAIN JOHN PARKER snapped. "The *Star Girl* is not for sale. Have I made myself clear, Reedy? This ship is not for sale, either now or at any future time."

Parker emphasized his words by bringing his fist down on the desk at which he was sitting.

"I—uh—really, Captain," Reedy said. He was a little nervous rat of a man, apparently always apprehensive that violence was about to be done to him. He looked at the size of the fist

resting on the desk top and gulped, "I—ah—There was no offense intended, Captain. I was merely instructed to inquire if you would consider selling the ship of which you are owner and captain. Really—"

"Who instructed you?" Parker demanded. He knew and thoroughly disliked the man sitting opposite him. Reedy was another of the get-rich-quick tribe of sharpsters and tricksters that had given Venus City its name of



being the toughest spot known to exist on the three planets, Earth, Mars, and Venus. With no regular occupation, Reedy apparently made a precarious living acting as agent for anybody who wanted to buy anything and who was willing to engage his services. It was Parker's private opinion, gained during the hard years he had flown in and out of Venus City, that Reedy was not above rolling a drunk in an alley. Certainly this was the first time anybody had ever heard of him trying to buy a space ship.

"I—really—" Reedy was still looking at Parker's fist. "I cannot reveal the name of the person who retained me—"

"Very well," Parker interrupted. "We are about ready to blast off. Good-bye."

He rose to his feet, signifying that the interview was over.

"Is your decision final, Captain?" Reedy insisted. "After all you might find it wise to sell—"

A red flag waved in front of a bull would not have produced a more violent reaction. Parker's face turned red. Sell the *Star Girl*! He had worked for years learning all the million and one details essential to the efficient operation of a space ship. He had worked for more years scrimping and saving in an effort to raise the credits necessary to buy one, and only an inheritance from an uncle on earth had enabled him, at the age of 31, to raise the necessary funds. True, the *Star Girl* was only a tramp, and equally true, he was only using her for short hops on Venus, but she was the first of a line of ships that would fly the spaces between the planets, if Parker's dreams came true. He could see them now, sleek passenger liners blasting off from earth, first stop, Mars; freighters coming home with cargos not from the seven seas but from

the worlds of space! The Parker Line—All these splendid dream ships would be the sons and grandsons of the *Star Girl*.

He controlled his temper with an effort of will. He was a big man. The tailors who made his uniforms never bothered with padding the shoulders. There had been the faintest trace of irritated bluster in his voice. The bluster disappeared. His voice became suave and soft.

"Are you threatening me, Reedy?" he said.

Reedy was not a good judge of character. He thought the soft suave voice showed fear. This made him bold. "Well, not exactly," he said. "But I suggest you will find it wise to consider my proposition—"

*Rip!*

Parker was on his feet. The big hand went out across the desk, the fingers closed around Reedy's throat. The ripping sound came from tearing cloth.

Reedy squealed like a trapped rat.

Parker held him in one hand and shook him. "Who's trying to buy my ship?" he demanded. "What's back of this?"

"I don't know anything," Reedy shrilled. "Let me go."

"Who sent you to me?"

"I don't know who he was. He came up to me and said he had heard the *Star Girl* was for sale and asked me to go see what the price was. That's all I know."

"You're a liar."

"I'm telling the truth," Reedy insisted. "I don't know who he was."

The man was lying, Parker was convinced. Somebody, for some reason, wanted the *Star Girl*. He didn't know who or why. It would be easier for him to deliver his heart on a silver platter than to part with his ship. Reedy knew more than he was telling and



Parker's simple intention was to shake the truth out of him. He started to do this.

*Bong!*

THE chime in the cabin throbbed musically. It was the takeoff signal. Simultaneously the loud speaker hidden in a wall niche clicked softly and the stentorian voice of Red Welsh, mate of the *Star Girl*, came rolling through the ship. "Alllll aaaabooaaard. We will blast off in five minutes. Alll aaaboarrrd. Visitors, if any, please vacate at once."

"That means me," Reedy quavered. "I've got to get off. The ship is going to blast."

"The ship is going to blast off all right," Parker said evenly. "But that doesn't mean you."

"But I can't stay. I haven't a ticket."

"Don't let it bother you. You can be the guest of the ship."

"But—"

"We'll be back in Venus City in three days," Parker assured him. "I haven't time to continue our conversation just at present but during the next three days you and I must have a nice little talk—with you doing most of the talking. As for the expenses, don't let that worry you. It won't cost you a cent."

Parker's voice was still soft and suave. His eyes twinkled merrily. Reedy shuddered. He tried to argue but his protests were waved aside. "I trust you don't mind if I lock you in here," Parker said, as he closed and locked the door.

Somebody wants the *Star Girl*, Parker thought as he went forward to take over the controls and blast off. Somebody wants this ship bad enough to try threats to get her.

Since he would have parted with his right arm quicker than he would have parted with his ship and since Reedy probably knew more than he was telling,

Parker was taking the obvious course. He was holding Reedy. The little rat would talk.

In the control room Red Welsh grinned at him. "Hiyah, Boss," Red said. "Everything ready to blast. Locks closed and sealed. Fuel tanks full. Cargo all abroad and stowed. Crew at stations. One man from the engine room gang failed to show up and I had to sign on a new man to take his place. Got four passengers for this jump. I checked 'em on board myself. Three men and one Oh-boy-you-ought-to see-her-Cap woman."

Red Welsh rolled his eyes and made motions with his hands to indicate the woman passenger was indeed something to look at. Besides being mate of the ship, Welsh was Parker's best friend. He was a thoroughly efficient but entirely disrespectful first officer.

"Five," Parker corrected.

"Only four," the mate insisted. "I counted 'em myself. Here's the list if you don't believe me."

"Five," Parker repeated, waving aside the proffered passenger list. He explained about Reedy. "The devil!" Welsh gasped. "You're not fixing on selling, are you, Cap?"

"Not in a million years," Parker snorted. He settled himself into the control chair, picked up the microphone of the loud speaker system used in the ship. "Engine room?"

"All ready to blast, sir," the answer came.

"Very well. We're taking off." His hands moved over the controls. This was the heart of the ship, this control room. Set under the nose, it provided a view of everything that lay ahead. Directly under the hands of the pilot were the thousand and one controls, meters, gauges that controlled and recorded the operation of everything from the amount of fuel being fed to the

rockets, and hence the speed of the ship, to the temperature of the air inside the vessel. Driving rockets, steering tubes, everything was controlled from here.

**T**HUNDEROUS roars echoed through the space port of Venus City as the *Star Girl* took to the air. Night was falling swiftly under the eternal cloud bank of the Veiled Planet. Like a lady crossing a muddy street, the *Star Girl* lifted her skirts and dived headfirst into the night, poking her blunt nose into the mists that rose over the Hotlands as she angled for altitude. Parker always took her off and landed her himself, but when she had her altitude and her speed, he turned the controls over to Red Welsh and prepared to make his routine inspection of the ship.

"Oh, hel-lo!" a voice said from the door of the control room.

Parker looked up. A girl stood there. Involuntarily his mouth dropped open.

"Are you Captain Parker?" she asked.

"Yes," Parker answered, finding his voice. He had not seen a girl like this in many a day and the sight almost stunned him. "I assume you are Miss Jones."

"Oh, you needn't call me Miss Jones," the girl answered, laughing. "My name is really Mildred but everybody calls me Mitsie. I don't know why they call me that unless it's because I'm so small." She drew herself up to her full height of five feet and no inches and looked coyly at him as if to emphasize that while she wasn't very big in some ways she was big enough in others.

"Very well, Mit—" Parker, aware that the eye of Red Welsh was on him, abruptly checked himself. It had occurred to him that this girl looked distinctly cuddly but he also knew he had

no business thinking about cuddling this or any other girl, not for a few more years anyhow. When his line of ships was a going concern—

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"I was wondering what time we will get to Ross City?" she said.

Ross City, a mining town in a distant range of Hotland hills, was the first stop of the ship.

"Seven o'clock in the morning," Parker answered.

"Oh, *thank you*," Mitsie Jones said, smiling again. "Thank you ever so much." Then, as if for good measure, as she went out the door she smiled again, over her shoulder this time.

It was exactly the kind of a smile that all mothers warn their daughters never to use on a man.

Her high heels thumped on the composition flooring in the direction of the main lounge.

**C**APTAIN PARKER stared after her. He was still staring after her several moments later when he realized he was hearing a voice. It was the voice of Red Welsh, who had witnessed this little scene.

"Well, well, well—" the voice was saying.

Parker flushed. "You go to hell," he said hotly.

The mate grinned. "Just between you and me, Skipper, I would like to know what that cute little bit of business is going to do in Ross City."

Parker had been wondering about the same thing. He knew Ross City. It was a mining town, hot, tough, and terrible. To his knowledge, there were only six women in the town. Three of them were wives of mining officials. The other three followed another profession. Parker shook his head. He preferred to think about something else.

"What about the other passengers?"

he demanded.

"Besides Mitsie, there are three others. One of them, by the way, is big-shotty as hell. Vardon. Elliott Vardon. Ever hear of him?"

"Ever hear of him?" Parker whistled. Who had not heard of Elliott Vardon! The man was a multi-millionaire, and becoming bored with himself, had turned to big game hunting for a thrill. His picture, and pictures of the trophies he had brought back from the four corners of space, had occupied more space in the Sunday supplements than all the Miss Americas put together. Parker remembered a picture he had seen of Vardon's trophy room. It contained heads not only of all the dangerous wild animals that remained on earth but of the far more dangerous and deadly beasts of Mars. There had also been trophies from Venus, all the important ones, with the single exception, Parker remembered, of the great bear of Venus. And even Vardon would not be likely to go after that!

"What's he doing here?" Parker asked.

"After more heads, I suppose," the mate answered. "He loaded a special amphibian tank aboard that he claims will practically dig its way through the worst kind of jungle. It's the damndest looking contraption you ever saw."

"The damned fool will lose his own head if he goes poking around in these jungles," Parker muttered. "Those Hotland natives are tough customers. What about the other passengers?"

"Fellow by the name of Burger, a geologist, and a Venusian by the name of Tom Leek. Skipper, I am not one to tell tales out of school but there is something funny about this Tom Leek. I was talking to one of the boys from the *Sun Queen*. She landed yesterday direct from earth. Leek was on her. He was being deported from earth."

"The devil!" Parker gasped. This was news. Venusians were strictly forbidden to land on earth. The reason was simple. The first space ship to Venus had brought back a few natives to earth. This was quite all right, except that the Venusians had brought with them some kind of a plague germ. The disease was not particularly dangerous on Venus but on earth it stirred up merry hell. Thousands of deaths resulted before the plague was brought under control. The result had been a law: no Venusians on earth.

"How did he get to earth in the first place?" Parker questioned.

The mate shrugged. "I'm no Quiz Kid, Cap. The story, as I got it, was that he was picked up some place in South America. Naturally, the cops put the bounce on him."

"Possibly he stowed away on a ship, hid out during the voyage, and slipped away without being seen when the ship landed on earth," Parker hazarded. It didn't much matter, so far as he could see. He had other things to think about, including a routine inspection of the ship and Reedy. The inspection came first. Reedy would have to wait.

He began his inspection.

IN THE port observation room a man was staring through the heavy glass-ite windows. The ship was over the Hotlands. Outside the night was as black as the tunnel to hell.

"Good evening," Parker said.

The man turned quickly, glanced at the uniform. "Ah. I assume you are Captain Parker? I am George Burger.

"Oh, yes. The geologist."

"Quite right." Burger was a reedy, nervous individual, with horn-rimmed glasses. Something about him made Parker think of a neurotic rabbit that has been frightened by a swooping hawk and now imagines that every

moving shadow is another hawk. "I'm glad you came in, Captain," Burger continued. "There is something I would like to ask you."

"Go ahead."

"What do you know about *that*?" Burger asked, gesturing toward the heavy glassite observation window.

"What do I know about what?" Parker answered. He was slightly nettled. There was nothing to be seen outside. They were flying in the lower fringe of the cloud belt that covers Venus like a blanket. Mist was streaking the glass of the port. Parker knew what was down below them. Swamp, jungle, the damndest mass of interwoven creepers ever seen by human eyes—and death.

"Watch closely," Burger answered. "There! That's what I mean."

A flicker of light had fingered through the darkness below them.

"Oh," Parker said. "That's swamp lightning."

"But what causes it?"

"I don't know. What causes lightning on earth? Cloud masses generate static electricity and when enough is generated, the lightning follows."

"In that case," Burger said, "the flashes should appear all over Venus. Do they?"

"Why—" Parker thought about the matter, trying to remember. "As I recall, they don't. This particular lightning seems to occur only in one spot. Now that you mention it, I haven't seen the discharges anywhere else. You can see them here all the time, a flash occurring every few minutes."

"Ah!" said Burger. "Does that mean anything to you, Captain?"

"I'm afraid it doesn't," Parker answered. He was mystified. "Is it supposed to mean something?"

"It certainly is," Burger answered.

"What would you say, Captain, if I

told you that within the last ten years exactly the same kind of lightning has been appearing in the Catatumbo region in Venezuela?"

Parker stared at the man, wondering what this was all about. "What are you driving at?" he demanded.

"I'm driving at—" Burger stopped in mid-sentence. He was looking behind Parker, at the door of the observation room. Fear showed on his face. He looked like a rabbit that is now certain it has seen a hawk and is too frightened to move.

Parker turned.

A Venusian was standing in the door.

**A**LTHOUGH the temperature of the ship was very comfortable by earth standards, the Venusian was covered from head to foot in heavy furs.\*

"Good evening," Parker said. "I assume you are Tom Leek."

"Yes," the Venusian nodded. "Assumption quite correct, sir captain."

"Is there anything I can do for you Mr. Leek?"

"No, sir captain, thank you. I come to room merely to observe."

"That's what it's for," Parker said. "Look all you want. Now if you will excuse me," his nod included both Burger and Tom Leek, "I have a ship inspection to complete." He started to leave the room.

"But Captain Parker—" it was Burger speaking.

"What is it, Mr. Burger?"

"This Venusian! Surely you don't permit him to have the freedom of the ship!"

"Surely I do," Parker grunted. "You are new here, Mr. Burger? In that case, you must remember we are on

\* Accustomed through countless generations to the sweltering heat of the Hotlands, the Venusians were always cold when in a temperature comfortable to humans. In consequence they swatched themselves in woolens and furs.—Ed.

Venus, not on earth. Incidentally, if you are really curious about swamp lightning, here is the very person who will know about it if anybody does." He gestured toward Tom Leek.

"Lightning!" said Leek. Living under eternal cloud banks, the faces of the natives of Venus are milky white and almost completely expressionless. But startled surprise showed on the face of Tom Leek when Parker mentioned lightning. It was gone almost as soon as it appeared. "Very glad to talk about lightning," Leek said. "Not much is known, however. Are you a scientist?" he questioned, looking at Burger.

"N—no," Burger answered. "No. I'm not a scientist. I just saw the lightning and wondered—wondered about it." He tried to smile, then passed a hand to his forehead. "I—I think I am becoming a little ship sick. If you will excuse me—"

Almost running, he darted out of the observation room. Parker stared curiously after him. "What the devil is eating him?" he wondered. He glanced at Tom Leek, but the face of the Venusian was impassive. Parker shrugged. He had an inspection to make. As he went out of the room, he saw that Tom Leek had turned and was staring out the window. In the far distance the swamp lightning flashed again, momentarily illumining the chalk white face of the Venusian.

In the main lounge, he found two passengers. One of them was Mitsie Jones. The other, Parker knew without asking, was Elliott Vardon. The big game hunter was tanned a mahogany brown. He looked sleek and fit. The two were drinking champagne cocktails prepared by the only steward the ship possessed. Vardon was apparently relating one of his hunting exploits for the benefit of Miss Jones.

"The beast was charging and there was I with only a single shot left in my gun," Vardon was saying.

Mitsie was hanging on every word, listening breathlessly.

"I threw up my rifle and fired without taking aim," Vardon said. He paused to let the effect of his words sink in on his listener.

"Oh, Mr. Vardon, tell me what happened!" Mitsie cried.

"Got him straight through the heart," Vardon said nonchalantly.

"Oh!" Mitsie gasped. "That was simply wonderful. You do the most thrilling things, Mr. Vardon."

Obviously flattered, the hunter began to recount another exploit. There was something about the scene that thoroughly disgusted Parker. He stalked through the lounge without speaking.

An hour later, he had finished his inspection of the ship. Everything was working perfectly, everything was ship-shape.

"Now for Reedy," he said to himself.

He went forward to his cabin, unlocked the door, and entered.

"I'm ready to listen to you now," he said, stepping into the room.

If he had run into a solid wall he would not have stopped quicker. His eyes widened in startled surprise.

Reedy was waiting for him all right. He was lying on the floor, face down, one arm under his head. Sticking out of his back was the hilt of a heavy knife. A red stain had discolored his coat and had run around his body, spreading itself over the floor. Blood.

"Holy jumping devils!" Parker gasped. "The man's been murdered."

## CHAPTER II

### The Fate of the Star Girl

THERE was no doubt that Reedy had been murdered. The position

of the knife in the middle of the back removed all possibility of suicide. Reedy had been stabbed from behind by someone who had secured entry to the cabin. And—the door had been locked.

But the locked door, Parker instantly realized, was not very important. The lock was as old as the ship, its mechanism simple. A finger nail file or a hair pin, used by someone who knew how to do it, would open the lock. The important question was—why had Reedy been murdered? Who, would want to kill this insignificant little rat?

Parker swiftly examined the man. The blow had been delivered with considerable force, and the knife had passed straight into the heart. It had been a coward's blow that had struck this man down, but because it had been delivered from behind, it had been no less effective.

Parker carefully refrained from touching the handle of the knife. There might be fingerprints on the handle, and while fingerprints were strictly outside his province, there was a police force of a sort in Ross City that might be able to dust for prints. It was to the police in Ross City that this murder would have to be reported. In the meantime—it gave Parker a shock to realize that in the meantime the murderer would be aboard.

He walked over to his desk. There was a telephone connection between his cabin and the control room. He intended to use the phone to warn Red Welsh that there was a murderer aboard.

As he started toward the desk, the lights went out in the cabin. One second the room was brilliantly illuminated. The next second, without any warning whatsoever, the room was plunged into utter blackness.

"What the hell—" Parker gasped. Perhaps a fuse had blown. His first panicky thought was that something had happened to the ship. The muted purr of the rockets reassured him. As long as the rockets roared the ship was in no danger. A burned out fuse could account for the failure of the lights in his cabin. He fumbled his way to the desk, found the telephone.

"Red!" his voice jabbed into the mouthpiece. The line was always open, to provide for the swift transmission of information in an emergency. "Red. Call the engine room and send somebody up to check the fuse block. My lights are out."

He waited for an answer.

It didn't come.

"Red!" His voice was harsh now as some sixth sense scented the existence of an emergency.

He knew his voice was throbbing from the speaker in the control room. He waited for Welsh to answer. Under no circumstances would the mate leave the control room while the ship was in flight. Somebody had to be there, and on the *Star Girl*, short manned for the overnight Venus hops, either the mate or the captain, or both, were in the control room.

Then the mate answered.

"Go to hell!" Over the open phone system, Parker heard Red Welsh snarl the words. His first startled thought was that the mate was speaking to him.

"What the hell, Red?" he demanded.

"That this, Damn you!" Welsh said.

*Thud!*

ONLY one thing could produce the thud that echoed through the speaker. Two things, rather. A fist meeting yielding flesh. A fist savagely ramming home against a body.

The sound come from the control room! It meant, could only mean, one

thing.

Red Welsh was in a fight! He had hit somebody.

*Crack!*

No sound of a fist, that! It was a crunching blow, like the sound made by a blackjack meeting bone.

Over the loudspeaker came a rasp of a man groaning. Whether it was Welsh who had groaned or his unknown assailant, Parker did not know. He did not wait to find out. Diving across the cabin, he fumbled for the doorknob, found it, jerked open the door and dived into the runway that led forward from his cabin to the control room. He expected to find lights burning here. They weren't.

In the darkness he could hear someone swearing. From the direction of the main lounge came the sound of a woman's scream. Suddenly, without warning, an alarm siren began to moan in the ship. This siren was automatic in its operation. The instant anything went seriously wrong with the propulsion equipment, the siren would begin to sound.

It was sounding now, its note a rising crescendo of harsh screaming roaring through the ship.

Simultaneously, the rockets stopped firing.

Parker's heart turned a double flip-flop and jumped up into his mouth.

*The rockets had quit!*

Whether they had been turned off or had stopped because of some fault in the firing mechanism, he did not know. What had happened did not greatly matter. The thing that did matter was that without the rockets, the ship would dive nose first into the green hell that lay below. Space ships didn't crash often. The same one never crashed twice. Sometimes there were survivors.

Usually there weren't.

Cursing like a madman, Parker raced along the passageway that led to the control room. The odds were nine to one that the rockets had stopped because of what had happened there. If the ship were to be saved from crashing, he had to get to the control room. In the darkness, Parker slipped and fell headlong, ramming his head into a steel wall. Stars exploded before his eyes.

He tried to drag himself to his feet, but his legs folded under him. All he could do was crawl. He crawled.

THE ship was a bedlam of sound. The siren was screaming like some shrill-voiced monster warning of coming death. There were only four passengers on board. Six crew men, one steward, Welsh and Parker completed the roster. On short hops the ship did not need the large crew she would have needed to cross space. But Parker had the impression he could hear all four of the passengers screaming at the same time.

He could imagine the horrible hell of the engine room, especially if the lights were out down there too. There were plenty of flashlights available in the engine room for just such an emergency as this, but even if the black gang did have light, they were in trouble. Duty would keep them to their posts, trying to correct whatever was wrong, until the last moment, but they were faced with the horrible knowledge that the engine room, in the bottom of the ship, would be smashed to flinders when they crashed. The passengers might have a chance to emerge alive. But the crew—

The ship had been flying low. She would fall in one hell of a hurry. In two minutes, maybe less, she would dive into the swamps unless the rockets came on.





thing was holding him down. He couldn't sit up. His head was threatening to break wide open. He ran an exploratory hand over his head, found a bump as big as a goose egg there. The bump throbbed painfully at his touch and the pain brought back the memory of what had happened.

The ship *had* crashed. This was no nightmare, no dream. This was real, as real as that person he could hear screaming. Somewhere, somebody was badly hurt or badly scared, or both. The screams were shrill and terrible.

Again Parker tried to get up. Again something seemed to hold him down. For an instant he was sick, terribly sick, as his stomach seemed to turn over. He retched and cold sweat bathed his body. He struck a match. A girder lay across his legs, pinning him down. He managed to slide out from under it and rose to his feet, surprised that his legs would support him. Logically it seemed his legs should be broken. But they apparently weren't. The door of the control room hung on its hinges. Lighting another match he groped his way forward.

Red Welsh was all tangled up in the shattered mass of equipment that controlled the ship.

"Red!" Parker gasped. "Red! Are you all right, man?"

The mate's eyelids fluttered.

"Hi yah, Cap," he muttered.

Parker took him by the shoulder, shook him gently.

"Oh, god, don't do that!" Red gasped. "I'm all torn to pieces. Don't touch me."

"Where are you hurt, Red?" Parker whispered. He was desperately afraid he knew the answer without asking.

"Ain't hurt," Red said, contradictorily. "Feel fine. Never felt better in my life." The eyes focused on the match Parker was holding. "Whatcha

using a match for, Cap?" the mate said. "Why don'tcha turn on the lights?"

Parker's clenched teeth bit into his tongue. Welsh was out of his head.

"Where does it hurt most, Red?" he questioned.

The mate ignored the question. When Parker first touched him he screamed with pain but now he seemed not to realize he was hurt. His eyes focused on the captain's face.

"Look, Cap," he said. "You get the dirty son ——— who did this."

"What?" Parker gasped.

"A gun stuck in my face was the first thing I knew," the mate wheezed. "—Said the ship was being taken over and told me where I was to land her—"

THE words were coming with obvious effort. "I jerked off the lights and slugged out. Then I got popped over the head. It almost knocked me out. I fell across the controls and accidentally cut off the rockets. Sorry, Cap—" Welsh wheezed. "But I wasn't going to let anybody take over your ship without a scrap."

"Who was it?" Parker whispered fiercely. Somewhere inside of him a blast furnace had leaped into operation. Somebody had tried to steal his ship.

"Funny thing," Welsh wheezed. "I knew I oughta get the rockets turned on. I laid there and thought about it but no matter how I tried, I couldn't push the switches. Arms just wouldn't work—"

He had been hit on the head and almost paralyzed, Parker saw. Even then he had tried to keep the ship moving.

"Who was it?" Parker rasped. "I'll kill him with my bare hands!"

"I guess I never would have got the rockets started," Welsh said musingly, "if I hadn't heard you yelling at me. Somehow, when I heard you yelling, my arms seemed to work a little. I got the

juice turned on. Lights on too. But, Cap, I just couldn't keep her working—"

The mate sighed heavily.

The sound of Parker's voice, fiercely ordering him to turn on the rockets, had somehow put strength into his arms. He had started the rockets. But — he hadn't been able to close the switches all the way. His mind had wandered from its task and the rockets had cut off again.

"Sorry, Cap. I tried—"

The eyes blinked shut.

"Who was it?" Parker demanded. It was too late to prevent the catastrophe but it was not too late to exact vengeance for it.

The mate's eyes opened. They groped for Parker, tried to focus on him. "Oh—" he heard a faint whisper. "It was—" The whisper died into silence. The eyes closed again.

For a minute Parker was too grief-stricken to curse. He stood there, holding a match in one hand, the other hand clasp and unclasp as he tried to tell himself over and over again that Red Welsh was not dead, could not be dead, *couldn't be*—

But the mate's eyes didn't open again. A swift examination revealed that he wasn't dead. But—he had suffered several broken bones and almost certainly a fractured skull. He was unconscious and likely to remain unconscious until—

"Gotta get him to a hospital," Parker told himself. "Gotta get him to a hospital."

Not until then did he fully realize that they had crashed in the heart of the Hotlands and that the nearest hospital was hundreds of miles away.

ALL through the hot night the swamp lightning of Venus illumined the scene of the tragedy as Parker, working desperately, dug his way through the

wreckage of the *Star Girl* in a frantic effort to rescue those who were still alive. Squalls of hot rain streaked intermittently down into the jungle. From the darkness came squawking sounds as the plentiful swamp life fought and mated, ignoring the plight of the humans in the ship. The *Star Girl* had come to rest in a shallow pool of water. Under the water was soft mud, the bottomless mud of Venus, and the ship was slowly sinking.

This was the end of the trail for the *Star Girl*. No more would she fly the spaces between the planets. Even if the shattered propulsion equipment could have been repaired, there was no chance to lift the ship out of the muddy hole in which she had landed. She died here, and in all probability, the Parker Line died with her.

The dawn revealed six humans and one Venusian alive. Tom Leek had shed his woollens and his furs. Rain streaked his pale white skin. To humans, this jungle was death, but to Tom Leek it was home. All during the night he had worked side by side with Parker, rescuing the wounded, removing equipment from the ship. He seemed to gain strength from the rain and the heat.

Parker ran his eye over the little group that had survived. They had gained the shelter of a little knoll, where heavy trees protected them from the rain. Red Welsh was lying on the ground, breathing slowly and laboriously, every breath an effort. He had not regained consciousness. Mitsie Jones had salvaged a pillow from somewhere and was placing it under the mate's head. In the middle of the group, Burger squatted on the ground, looking like a rabbit overtaken by calamity. There was a bruise on his face and his clothing was torn. Beside him the one member of the crew that had survived was sucking at a wet cigarette. The

man had said his name was Anson. He was the new man Welsh had signed on before leaving Venus City. His eyes were nervously darting from Parker to the jungle. There was dried blood on his forehead.

Of the seven who had survived, Vardon was the only one who seemed uninjured. And he had lost all of his nonchalance. The big game hunter had salvaged one of his elephant guns from the wreck and he was nervously fingering it as he stared at the jungle around them.

"I WON'T try to keep the worst from you," Parker said. He had stripped down to a pair of pants. A heavy pistol was holstered on a strap around his waist. "We're in a spot."

He paused and let his eye run over them.

"Can't we call help by radio?" Burger nervously asked.

"The radio is smashed to hell and gone," Parker answered.

"When we don't arrive on schedule, won't they send out a rescue expedition looking for us?" This was Vardon speaking. Vardon no longer looked tan and fit.

"Yep," Parker answered. "When they get around to it, they'll send a ship out looking for us. The ship may even find us, but it won't do a damned bit of good because no ship can land and take off out here in this hell hole."

He knew that any rescue ship that might be sent out would be sent out only because there was a chance they might be found within a few miles of Venus City or Ross City. In this case, a rescue party might be sent through the swamps after them.

"If we get out of here alive, we've got to do it ourselves," Parker continued. "I don't mind telling you that I don't think we have a chance in a

hundred of making it on foot. I know a little about these Hotlands. If the natives don't get us, the swamps will." He looked at Tom Leek. "And the natives out here don't like humans."

Leek stared impersonally back at him but said nothing. Leek was the only one who had an excellent chance of coming out alive. This was home to him.

"We've got one chance," Parker continued. He was aware that everyone looked eagerly at him when he spoke the words. He turned to Vardon. "The mate told me just after we took off that you had stowed some kind of a swamp buggy aboard. Is that correct?"

Vardon's face showed utter confusion. "My god, yes, captain," he gasped. "How could I have forgotten it? It's a special amphibian tank designed to operate in these jungles. The very thing we need, Captain, the very thing. If we can only remove it from the ship—"

"We'll get it out of the ship if we have to blast," Parker said grimly.

And get it out they did. It was a beautiful thing, a cigar-shaped body made of shining chrome steel, with a small rounded dome at the front. The driver sat there. Powered by a semi-deisel, it ran on caterpillar tracks shielded on all sides by rounded fenders. At the rear was a small but strongly constructed paddle wheel.

"Better than a propeller," Vardon explained, indicating the paddle wheel. "Propellers only choke up weeds. Besides they have to have two or three feet of water to operate and this paddle wheel will push the tank wherever it will float."

It was a dream tank for jungle operation. The pointed nose would push its way through heavy vegetation and the slender body would pass through places where a more bulky machine would

have been unable to go. Moreover it was already stocked with food and fuel. Vardon had laid in his supplies before leaving Venus City.

It was the very thing they needed. With this tank, they could cross the Venus jungles. Without it, they would have been stranded. There was triumph in Parker's shout.

They were saved.

"IT'S a damned lucky thing we had you on board this trip," he said to Vardon. "If we get out of here, we'll owe our lives to you. And with this tank, we will get out. No question about that."

His spirits were rising. This tank would take them to safety. It would take Red Welsh to a hospital.

The tank, with Vardon at the controls, churned its way to shore. The castaways gathered around it. There was hope in their eyes now. Even Burger looked less frightened. Only Tom Leek remained impassive. Tom Leek and Vardon. Vardon looked scared, even more scared than he had been before they had secured the tank from the ship.

"What's the matter with you?" Parker demanded. "Isn't there enough fuel for the engine? If there isn't, we can get plenty of oil from the *Star Girl* and deisels will run on anything."

"There's plenty of fuel," Vardon muttered. He didn't look at Parker.

A sudden qualm of uneasiness ran through the captain. "Then what is it?" he snapped. "Is there something wrong with the tank?"

"The tank is all right," Vardon said. He had picked up the elephant gun and was holding it at the ready. "There's only one thing wrong: there are seven of us here, and the tank is only designed to hold two passengers. Even if we throw away all the stores, there won't

be room for more than three!"

His words rang in Parker's mind like hammers of doom. He looked again at the body of the tank. That slender cigar-shaped hull was perfectly designed to force its way through the jungles, but the same design that made it perfect for its purpose also strictly limited the room inside the hull.

There were seven people here, including Tom Leek, who could be eliminated. The jungle held little danger for him. That left six humans. Three of them might escape alive in the tank.

But what about the other three?

## CHAPTER IV

### The Defiance of Mitsie

IN Parker's mind two thoughts were alternating. The first thought was that there was a murderer here. Although events had forced the memory into the back of his mind, he had not forgotten Reedy. The little chiseler had died and in all probability his killer was here. It was unlikely that any member of the crew had killed him, which left this group wide open to suspicion.

Also, the *Star Girl* had crashed as the result of an attempted holdup. Parker was not likely to forget *that*. The holdup would have had every chance of succeeding if Red Welsh had not put up a fight. Locked in the control room, the holdup man could have forced the mate to land the ship where he pleased.

A murder, an attempted holdup—two factors in a mad equation. Down in the engine room all but one of the crew had died in the crash. They, too, had been murdered. Parker's teeth clinched at the thought. He knew those men who had died in the engine room, every one of them. Good men, honest and loyal.

Why should anyone have wanted the

*Star Girl* badly enough to attempt to take her by force?

Who had killed Reedy?

Parker put the questions out of his mind. They would have to wait. The important thing now, the only thing that really mattered, was to stay alive. For the three people who went in the tank that would be comparatively simple. For the other three, it would be exceedingly difficult.

"One thing is certain," Parker said slowly. "There will be no argument about one person who will ride in that tank."

His words were forceful. He meant them to be that way.

They looked at him, this motley group of assorted humans, resentment on their faces. They looked from him to the tank and at each other. They knew that three would live and three would die.

"I suppose you mean yourself." This was Anson, the substitute oiler, speaking.

"Shut up!" Parker snapped.

"I won't shut up. Just because you were captain of the ship, you think you can run things still. You're not captain any longer and your rank don't mean a thing."

"Either shut up or I'll shut you up!" Parker said. He stepped forward. Anson drew back. "I'm still captain," Parker said. "I'm running this show and what I say goes. Anybody got anything to say about that?"

He looked around the group. Nobody said anything. Burger looked as if he wanted to say something and didn't quite dare. Mitsie Jones smiled at him. She was very much bedraggled this morning, her clothing torn, hair awry, all make-up washed from her face. Parker wondered if she was trying to smile herself into a berth in the tank. *Women and children first.* That

law was old before men sailed the seas of space.

"I mean Red Welsh," Parker said, his voice flat and hard.

FOR a moment, no one said anything. Then Burger spoke. "I don't see the reason in attempting to take him. He's as good as dead already."

"That is as it may be," Parker said. "I'll knock the teeth out of any man who says Red Welsh doesn't go in that tank. If anybody wants to challenge me, now's the time."

There were no challenges. Burger, having screwed up nerve to make the statement, was apparently terrified at the reaction to what he had said. The geologist was trembling all over. "No—" he stammered. "I mean—of course — if you say so, Mr. Welsh goes."

"I say so," Parker answered.

"Of course he goes," Mitsie Jones said, looking angrily at Burger. "He's helpless and we have to take care of him."

"Thank you," Parker said. He wondered if he had judged this girl incorrectly. "The second passenger in the tank, I think, should be Miss Jones."

"That's a bunch of hooley!" It was Anson speaking again. "She ain't got any better right in the tank than any of the rest of us."

"Women first—"

"To hell with that bunk. I say she ain't got any more right than the rest of us, if that much. You know what she is? She's a little tramp, that's what she is. She used to work in a dive in Venus City. I knew her there. She's nothing but a tramp. We ought to leave her out here in this damned jungle—"

*Smack!*

Parker knocked Anson sprawling. He

was already sick inside, but the things the oiler had said made him a little sicker. This girl—a tramp?

"Sorry," he apologized to her.

Her face had whitened at the oiler's words. A tiny pulse was throbbing in her throat and her eyes were fastened on Parker's face imploringly.

"Get up," he said to Anson. "And say you're sorry for what you said."

"I'm not sorry," Anson muttered. "It's the truth."

Parker stepped forward. The oiler had risen to one knee. Parker yanked him to his feet. "A lady is a lady," he said, shaking the man. "Do you understand? Miss Jones will be the second passenger in the tank."

"Y—yes."

"All right," said Parker.

"No," said Mitsie Jones.

**H**ER tone drew the eyes of everyone. "Just because I'm a woman doesn't mean a thing," she said angrily. "I'll take my chances with the rest of you. I'm no better than anybody else."

She looked like a tiny white kitten spitting defiance at a circle of mastiffs.

"You have every right to a place in the tank," Parker said.

"I won't take it," she blazed, bursting into tears. A tiny foot stamped angrily on the ground. "Oh, you men—I hate you all!" She turned and started to run away.

Parker overtook her in a stride. She flung his restraining hand off her shoulder. "Leave me alone! Why don't you draw straws to see who goes in the tank? I won't accept a place in it just because I'm a w—woman."

Draw straws? It was an idea. There was no better method of determining who should be left behind than by casting lots. Let fate decide who should live and who should die.

"Very well," said Parker. "We'll

draw straws."

Anson showed sullen resentment at the suggestion and Burger oscillated between hope and trembling fear. Tom Leek remained imperturbable and Parker wondered what he was thinking.

"He probably thinks we are a bunch of cowards," Parker thought. Whatever might be true of the Venusians, they were not cowards. Something about their environment seemed to toughen them up, to make them hard. Fear was almost an unknown emotion with them.

"Aren't you forgetting something?" Vardon asked, as Parker cut a branch from a tree and began to fashion thin slivers of wood that would serve as straws.

"Probably," Parker said. "What have you got on your mind?"

"Aren't you forgetting that this tank is mine? I had it designed, paid for it, brought it here, and it belongs to me. You're forgetting about that, aren't you?"

"What the hell difference does that make?"

The big game hunter shrugged. "It makes a great deal of difference."

"What?" Parker challenged.

"This," said Vardon defiantly. "This tank is mine. And I'm not going to draw straws to see if I win a place in it. I own it and I'm going to be one passenger in it whether you like it or not. That goes for the rest of you as well."

Backing against the tank, he brought the elephant gun to his shoulder.

"Well, I'm damned!" Parker gasped. He had completely forgotten that Vardon owned the tank and therefore had at least a theoretical right to use it. If Parker had owned the tank, he would have drawn straws with the rest. But Vardon was apparently another customer.

"Nuts on that stuff," he heard Anson

snarl.

"The mere fact of ownership does not, under these circumstances, justify priority," Burger said. "Legally, it is very doubtful if you own the tank. It can be classified as flotsam from a wrecked ship, in which case it belongs equally to all of us, since we all assisted in salvaging it. I believe the courts will uphold my contention."

As a bluff, it was one of the best Parker had ever heard, and coming from the meek Burger, it was especially surprising. He had not thought that Burger had the guts to try to run a bluff. There was no legal basis for his contention. The tank belonged to Vardon, wrecked ship or no wrecked ship.

"Nuts!" said Vardon.

"I believe you do not fully realize your position," Burger persisted. "You are taking the tank by what amounts to force. If you leave us here, and if, by some miracle, we do escape alive, you will not only be open to a suit for heavy damages, but your reputation will suffer. The papers will eat up the story. Elliott Vardon, millionaire hunter of big game, abandons companions to death—"

THE shot went home. Supposing he did force them to grant them priority in the tank and then the story got out? He would be a heel on three planets. Not that he wasn't already a heel but until now no one had known it. Parker could see him turning the thought over in his mind. The hunter was looking at the jungle and then at them and licking his lips. He did not relax his watchfulness nor let the rifle muzzle sag.

"If you escape alive—" Vardon muttered, thinking aloud. "The point is—you won't escape." His voice changed, became raspy and brittle. "I can take one other passenger. Not two. If I

take two I will have to throw away my supplies. One. Mitsie—"

He nodded at the girl. "Come along, Mitsie."

Parker started to speak and the words choked his throat. Vardon was refusing to take Red Welsh. He was not only abandoning them but he was refusing to take the badly injured mate. "Damn you—"

"Keep your hands away from that pistol!" Vardon snapped, swinging the rifle toward Parker. "I don't need to tell you that I'll shoot. And I never miss."

Parker jerked his hand away from the pistol holstered on his belt. That elephant gun would tear a hole in him as big as a hat. And Vardon would not hesitate to shoot. He cursed beneath his breath. Veins were throbbing in his temples. He wanted, desperately he wanted, to jump that rifle, and then to kick Vardon's teeth down his throat, but he strongly suspected the hunter was an expert with that gun.

"Come along, Mitsie," Vardon said. "Women first—"

"You go to hell!" said Mitsie Jones. Her fists were clenched defiantly and she looked as if any moment she was going to fly at Vardon, scratching and kicking.

The hunter looked as if he didn't believe his own ears.

"But you can't stay here."

"Why can't I?"

"Because—you'll die here. What's the matter, Mitsie? Don't—"

"Miss Jones to you."

For a moment Vardon stared at her. Under the tan his face was whitening with rage. "But—"

"I saw your picture in the paper so many times, I thought you were something wonderful," Mitsie Jones said. "Hereafter you better do your hunting in the rotogravure sections. In a pic-

ture, you look like a man." The words were stinging with scorn. "But when you get in a pinch all you look like is a first-class heel. All I can say is get in that buggy of yours and move along."

"All right," said Vardon. "You little tramp, I'll move along."

Parker had knocked one man down for calling her a tramp. He would have gladly given Vardon the same treatment if the rifle had not menaced him.

His face white with anger, but never for an instant relaxing his alertness, the hunter reached behind him and opened the door of the tank. He backed into the vehicle, slammed shut the heavy door.

**P**ARKER leaped straight for the front of the tank, his hand flashing to the pistol at his hip. His plan was simplicity itself. Vardon would have to enter the driver's seat to operate the tank. The cramped quarters would not give the hunter room to manipulate the rifle. Parker, with his pistol, would be able to get the drop on the hunter through the windows that enabled the driver to see. The hull of the tank, made of chrome steel, would turn a bullet. But a man on the outside could shoot through the windows. Parker would shoot, if Vardon refused to surrender, and shoot gladly.

"Hands up!" he shouted. Inside he could see Vardon slipping into the driver's seat. "If you touch those controls, I'll put a bullet through you."

Startled, the hunter looked up. His eyes popped open with amazement as he saw the pistol pointed at him. He was still holding his own weapon in one hand but in the cramped quarters, he could not bring it to his shoulder.

"Drop that gun!" Parker ordered. "And crawl backwards out of there."

Vardon made no move to obey.

"I'm counting to three and if you're not backing out there, I'll put a bullet between your eyes."

He meant every word he said. Shooting a man in cold blood was not something he liked, but in this case he would shoot and shoot without hesitation.

In answer, Vardon's fingers jabbed at the controls. He must have pressed the starter with his foot for the semi-diesel began to grind.

Parker pulled the trigger.

His hand jerked as the heavy pistol exploded.

The starter continued grinding. The motor coughed, took hold, ran for a second, then died. The starter gears whined again as Vardon pressed the button.

Dumbfounded, Parker stared at the hunter. By all rights, Vardon ought to be dead. Not six feet separated them. Although he was shooting through glass, there was not a chance that he would miss.

Then he saw what had happened. The round windows of the tank were filled with bullet-proof glass! The slug from his pistol had dug a small hole in the glass and had flattened itself. Thousands of tiny lines radiated out from the place where it had struck.

No wonder Vardon had dared to start the motor. Protected by bullet-proof glass, he was completely safe.

With a roar, the motor caught. Vardon's fingers stabbed at the gear control lever. Thundering, the tank lurched forward—straight toward Parker.

**N**EVER, in a lifetime of adventure, had he been closer to death. If the treads of that tank rolled over him, the weight of the monster would flatten him out like a stepped-on angle worm.

He hurled himself to one side. The tank struck him a glancing blow,



knocked him sprawling. The direction of his leap was away from the vehicle. This saved him. As he fell, he heard the tank crash past him. He hit and rolled along the ground like an animated rubber ball, to the protection of the trees. He was vaguely aware that Mitsie Jones, Burger, Ansen, Tom Leek, were crouching beside him.

Vardon whirled the tank in a circle, the treads revolving in opposite directions. He started to charge toward them but changed his mind when he saw the size of the trees behind which they were hiding. The tank turned, and like a monstrous alligator, rolled into the water. The paddle wheel began to spin. Throwing a bow wave, it moved across the muddy pool, climbed the opposite bank, and tearing reeds, went out of sight.

The roar of the motor drifted back long after the tank was gone. Then that sound too, went into stillness. In the stifled silence Parker could hear the muffled drip, drip, drip of the eternal Venus rain from the leaves of the trees. That was the only sound, that and Red Welsh moaning softly.

Then Anson began to curse.

"That dirty, low down — — —."

Parker let the man swear. He was too dazed and too weak to curse himself. He looked at Mitsie Jones.

"Nice weather, we're having," Mitsie said conversationally. "Do you think it will rain?"

In spite of himself Parker laughed.

Tom Leek was staring in the direction in which the tank had disappeared. "Sir Captain," he said, turning to Parker. "I will consider it an honor to dedicate my life to killing that man in the tank."

"You and me both," Parker said. "If I ever see him again— The hell of it is, I won't."

"I think you will," said Tom Leek

enigmatically. "I think at least some of us will see him again."

Had Vardon murdered Reedy, Parker wondered. Had the hunter attempted to buy the ship, and failing in that, had he tried to take it by force? It seemed incredible. Vardon was a multi-millionaire. He did not need to resort to piracy to get what he wanted. But—somebody had killed Reedy, somebody had tried to steal the *Star Girl*. And Vardon had brought along his tank. Had he anticipated the possibility that he might need such a vehicle, and made preparations in advance?

One thing was certain. Vardon would not hesitate at murder. His action in marooning them here proved that.

"I don't think we have a ghost of a chance," Parker said. "But our best bet is to stay here near the ship. If a rescue expedition sights it from the air, they may be able to drop supplies to us that will keep us alive until a party can reach us through the swamps."

He was only talking to hear himself talk, and he knew it. There was no chance of a rescue expedition coming to their aid.

## CHAPTER V

### Murder Outs

A MAN was screaming at the top of his voice.

Parker awakened with that sound in his ears. The murky light of a Venus dawn was brightening over the swamp, which meant that day had come. They had spent the preceding day removing things they might need from the still settling *Star Girl* and at night had retired to the wooded knoll to sleep. Now the night was over. And in the dawn a man was screaming as if he was try-

ing to tear out his throat muscles.

Captain Parker leaped to his feet. Around him the others, aroused by the sound, were stirring. Burger was there, Tom Leek, Mitsie Jones. Welsh, still unconscious, lay where they had placed him the night before. Only Anson was missing. It was the oiler who was doing the screaming. His voice came again.

"Hey, Captain! Come here, quick! Parker—"

Parker ran toward the voice. His first thought was that some wild animal was attacking the oiler. There were plenty of beasts of prey in these jungles but fortunately the knoll on which they had taken refuge was surrounded by water, which kept the beasts away. Or had kept them away.

Anson was standing on the shore.

"What is it, man? What's happened?"

Out from shore, veiling the morning mists, lay the wreck of the *Star Girl* and Parker had the impression that Anson was pointing at the ship.

"Up there!" the oiler said, pointing at the sky.

Parker looked up. He saw nothing. It was misty overhead. In the mist was a vague fluttering sound, like the *hush-hush-hush* of some gigantic fan. It was coming closer.

Anson cupped his hands and screamed at the sky.

Parker saw it then, swimming through the mists. A gigantic bird! Soaring on extended wings, it was floating through the air, like some tremendous roc.

It wasn't a bird, couldn't be a bird. No bird that big had ever taken to the air on Venus or anywhere else. A bird that big was incredible here. But equally incredible was the thought that this was an airplane. No ship depending on air for support of flight had ever been used on Venus. The human race

used rocket fliers and the Venusians had never invented airplanes.

It was absolutely impossible that this could be an airplane. But that was what it was. No ordinary airplane, either. A helicopter, with short, blunt wings, rounded at the tips, and gigantic whirling vanes that kept the ship aloft.

No space ship could land in this jungle, nor could an ordinary airplane. But this helicopter could land. Its pilot had seemingly sighted the wreck of the space ship. The helicopter was dropping slowly and steadily to the water beside it, the vanes whispering *hush-hush-hush* as they turned. There was no roar of motors from the ship, none of the throb that accompanies the operation of an internal combustion engine. The only sound was the whisper of the turning vanes.

"An airplane!" Mitsie Jones gasped. She and Burger had come to the shore and were watching the plane land. Her voice was vibrant with joy. Parker turned to look at her. Her face was alive with eagerness, her eyes glowing. He knew what this ship meant to her—life. It meant the same to all of them. Parker could feel his own heart pounding. They weren't going to die here. Impossible as it had seemed, they were going to be rescued. This helicopter, wherever it had come from, could only be a rescue ship.

**I**T LANDED with scarcely a splash, turned toward the shore. There were two occupants of the control cabin but their faces were hidden by goggles and Parker could not see who they were. The pontoons slid into the soft mud that lined the shore. The helicopter came to rest.

"I'll take your gun," a voice said in Parker's ear.

He had been staring at the helicopter,

eating it up with his eyes. Now something was jabbing him in the back and a voice was saying in a brittle, raspy tone.

"Keep your hands up or I'll blow you in two."

He raised his hands slowly, looked down and around. Burger was standing just behind him. Burger was holding a snub-nosed revolver against his back.

"What the hell—" Parker said. He felt Burger pull his gun out of its holster, saw the little geologist slip the weapon into his own pocket.

"You!" Parker choked.

"I'm the man who tried to buy your ship," Burger said. "If it will relieve your curiosity, I don't mind telling you that when I learned you wouldn't sell—I had a little conference with Reedy before he died—I tried to take your ship by force. Unfortunately that blundering mate of yours caused my plan to miscarry." Jets of flame danced in the geologist's eyes when he mentioned the mate.

Parker was too surprised to move. This little rat of a man, this shivering, frightened rabbit, had attempted piracy! It was ridiculous. Burger didn't have enough guts to approach a dish of ice cream without flinching.

Then he saw that Burger no longer looked like a frightened rabbit. He seemed to have taken on height. All timidity was gone from him.

Was it possible that Burger had been putting on an act, had been pretending to be scared half to death when he wasn't frightened at all?

"You—you killed Reedy?" Parker gasped.

Burger shrugged. "He would have talked and I didn't want him to talk. I was watching for him to leave the ship and when he didn't leave, I went looking for him." He shrugged again. "I

don't mind telling you, now that the information will do you no good, that I put the quietus on Reedy."

"You!" Fierce anger sent a surge of blood through Parker's veins. This rat had wrecked the *Star Girl*, trying to steal her. He had slugged Red Welsh. Involuntarily Parker stepped toward him.

Burger stepped back. The gun in his hand centered itself on the captain's heart. "If you want it now," Burger said, "it's all right with me."

His voice was as cold as ice. There was no mistaking his meaning. He would shoot, and shoot without compunction. There was death in his eyes, death in the steadiness with which he held the gun. Parker lifted his hands.

Burger studied him for a moment. Then he took Parker's gun out of his pocket and handed it to Tom Leek, who accepted it.

"If he moves, shoot him," Burger said. His face expressionless, the Venusian nodded.

"You too?" Parker said bitterly. He remembered the scene in the observation room of the *Star Girl* when Burger had asked him about the swamp lightning. The Venusian had put in an appearance and Burger had seemed terribly frightened. His fright had been assumed, Parker knew now. It had been an act put on for his benefit.

The two pilots climbed out of the helicopter. They were Venusians. Burger turned to them.

"What the hell kept you so long?" he demanded.

PARKER was past the point where he could feel surprise. To him the fact that Burger knew these two Venusians, that they had been coming for him, was no more startling than the incredible events that had already taken place.

"Sir leader," one of the pilots said. "The ship did not land where we were expecting it. We had to search for it, sir leader. It was not our fault that we were slow in finding it."

"You fools!" Burger raged. "Of course the ship did not land where you were expecting it. Our plans miscarried and the ship crashed. But that does not excuse your slowness in finding us."

He cursed them soundly. They cringed before him.

"Get into the helicopter!" Burger ordered. The sweep of his pistol meant that he intended to include Parker, Mitsie, Anson, and Tom Leek. They started to obey.

"What about Red Welsh?" Parker demanded.

"Leave him here," Burger ordered.

Parker had started toward the airplane. He stopped now and faced Burger. "I don't know who you are or what you're trying to do," he said. "But you won't leave Red Welsh here."

Again the pistol centered itself on Parker's heart.

"Get into the ship," Burger ordered.

"No," Parker was wondering if he dared try to hurl himself at the geologist. He didn't have a chance in a thousand of succeeding. But Red Welsh was his best friend. He tensed himself to leap. If he could jerk the pistol from Burger's hand before the geologist could fire, and then hold Burger in front of him as a shield to keep Tom Leek from firing—if he could do all that without getting himself killed, he might have a chance to get the drop on the whole crowd. It was a mad plan, he knew as quickly as it popped into his mind, but it was his only hope.

"All right," said Burger. "Of course we'll take the mate." He grinned. "As a matter of fact, I wouldn't think of leaving him behind. It has occurred to me that I have a use for him. So

don't try to jump me, Parker. You'll only get yourself killed. I am willing to admit that I don't want to kill you if I can help it." He grinned again. "I have a use for you too."

Parker stopped himself just in time. Under the compelling menace of the gun he and the girl were herded into the helicopter. There was bewildered fear on the girl's face. "W—what is this?" she whispered. "W—what's Burger going to do with us?"

Parker shook his head. He could not answer her questions. There were other questions he couldn't answer either. Where had this helicopter come from? Who had built it? The Hotland peoples? The Hotlands had never been even partly explored he knew, but so far as was known the natives of Venus were not capable of building planes. Apparently they had built this one. Certainly no helicopters had ever been imported from earth.

**S**LUGGISH under the added load, the plane rose into the air. Mist swirled around it, hiding the sight of the ground below, but the pilots seemed to know where they were going. They held the ship on a bee line which eventually took them to a range of hills. Cleverly hidden by the vegetation below them, but becoming more and more visible as the ship slid toward the ground, over the rounded hills sprawled—a city.

"Besides myself, you are the first humans ever to see this place," Burger said, grinning at Parker's amazement. "Even most of the Hotland tribes don't know it exists. It is the supreme achievement of the Venusians, their holy of holies, their sacred city."

There was contempt in his voice. "For a bunch of savages, I admit they are pretty far advanced," he continued. "That gadget up there on top of the

highest hill took some pretty sharp thinking."

Parker followed the gesture of Burger's hand. Through the mist, he could barely see a structure of some kind on the hill top. As he looked at it, a beam of light flashed out, winking through the mist like an air-mail beacon in the night. It was tremendously powerful. Even in the daylight, the flash of light was clearly visible.

"That," said Burger, "is what you called swamp lightning. I wanted to know if anybody on Venus had ever become sufficiently curious to try to investigate this strange form of lightning, so I asked you about it to see if you knew anything. You kindly told me it was swamp lightning and that nobody knew anything about it, or cared. Only it isn't lightning at all. It's a beam of radiation developed by the Venusians and it has the curious quality not only of precipitating almost continuous rainfall but it also accelerates the growth of vegetation to a tremendous degree. The Venusians have been operating it for centuries, maybe longer. This planet was always largely jungle, but even so, it didn't have enough swamps to suit the natives, until they invented this radiation that you thought was swamp lightning." He grinned. "With it in operation, they have built up enough swamps to suit even them."

"The devil!" Parker gasped. This was startling news. There had always been swamps on Venus, of course, but the hellish Hotlands had not been created by nature. The Venusians themselves had created these impenetrable jungles. And now, like some gigantic leprous growth, the jungles sprawled over most of the planet, smothering it with heat, drowning it with rain. That was what the Venusians liked—heat and rain, hot steaming jungles, swamps.

Then another thought struck Parker. "But you said that during the past ten years the same kind of lightning had been observed somewhere in South America, on earth!"

"Yes," Burger answered quietly. "That was what I said."

Making a sound like a gigantic fan slowly coming to a stop, the helicopter slid down to a landing in an open courtyard. Armed Venusian guards in trim uniforms came running and stood smartly at attention as Burger descended from the ship.

"Lock these three up," he ordered, jerking his thumb to indicate his captives.

The guards surrounded them, marched them across the open space toward a low building.

"Look!" said Mitsie Jones suddenly.

Parker followed the line of her pointing finger. Drawn up beside the building, mud-spattered, its bright steel discolored, was Vardon's tank.

## CHAPTER VI

### Secret of the Swamp Lightning

VARDON himself was in the same cell into which they were thrust. He looked up quickly when he heard someone entering, but when he saw who it was, he turned his eyes away. Apparently he had been manhandled for his clothing was torn and there were bruises on his face. All of his sleek, man of the world manner was gone.

"How did you get here?" Parker asked.

"I got out of the tank to look the country over and the damned natives jumped me," Vardon answered sullenly. "I didn't have a chance."

"I'm surprised," Mitsie said. "How many natives were there? Four or five thousand?"

Vardon flushed at her tone. He didn't answer.

"Leave him alone," Parker said.

"All right if you say so," the girl answered. "Excuse me if I seem to kick a rat when he's down but after those stories he told me, I just couldn't help wondering how such a big shot hunter ever let himself be trapped by a few simple natives."

"You seemed to enjoy listening to those stories," Parker said, remembering the scene he had witnessed in the lounge of the *Star Girl*. She looked hotly at him but clamped her mouth shut.

"We're all in this together," Vardon suggested. "Let's forget everything that has happened. If we want to escape from this mess alive, we have to stick together."

There was good, sound sense in what he said. "Okay," said Parker. He looked at Vardon and his voice grew hard. "With this exception: that if we ever do escape alive, I have a little business to discuss with you."

His hands balled into fists. He had not forgotten that Vardon had deserted them and the business he had with the hunter was to thrash him soundly—if they ever escaped. It would be a pleasure to beat hell out of this rat from the Sunday supplements. But that would have to come later—if it ever came at all.

The door of the cell opened. Burger and Tom Leek and six of the uniformed guards entered. The geologist had donned a uniform similar to that worn by the guards, except that this chest was covered with metals and his uniform was more gaudy. At a word from him the guards snapped to attention near the door.

"What do you want?" Parker asked.

The geologist wasted no time. "A space ship," he answered. "Failing to

buy your vessel, and failing to secure her by other means, I am left with no choice but to adopt other methods of obtaining a ship."

"Why do you want a ship?"

Burger grinned. He seemed to relish what he was about to say. "To carry supplies and colonists between Venus and the colony of Venusians now established in South America. In the past we smuggled them on board the regular liners but that method will not accommodate the numbers I am now ready to place on earth, and since our little business must be conducted in secrecy for several more years, the only alternative is to secure a space ship to make secret voyages between Venus and earth."

THERE was a colony of Venusians on earth! Parker had halfway expected to hear this. Everything pointed in that direction, the swamp lightning that Burger had said was now appearing in the Catatumbo region in South America, the fact that Tom Leek had been picked up on the headwaters of the Amazon, indicated the possibility that a colony of Venusians had been secretly established on earth. But in spite of the fact that he was expecting it, Parker was startled by the news.

"So what?" he said. "So there is a colony on earth! As soon as it is discovered—and it will be discovered—the air force will bomb hell out of it. "Where will the colony be then?"

Burger continued grinning. "You forget that you are now in a city on Venus that has been undiscovered since the first space ship landed here. I admit no one was looking for *this* city, but even if anyone did want to find it, the best air force in the world might hunt for it for a generation without finding it. Earth, of course, is a different planet. Things can be found there. But you are possibly also forgetting

what I told you about the lightning in the Catatumbo region. That section of South America has always been a jungle. In a few more years, with the radiation constantly bathing the area, it will be an impenetrable jungle, constantly covered by clouds, with vegetation growing ten times faster than it ever grew on earth before. Then the colony won't be found." There was triumph in his words, in the tone of his voice.

"Is that lightning in South America the same as the lightning—" Parker choked, appalled at the thought.

"Of course," Burger said. "The Venusians plan to create a replica of their Hotlands there. Since they can't change to suit their environment, they are changing the environment to suit them. A very ingenious idea, I might add."

It was more than ingenious. It was hellish! The Venusians, discovering that Venus was being colonized, very much against their will, had started to do some colonization of their own. But their colonization system consisted of changing the weather of a whole planet to suit their needs. They started in South America, in a natural jungle, and by means of the radiation they had discovered, increased rainfall and intensified the growth of vegetation. Nor would this process be long confined to South America. It would soon be transferred to Africa, then to the more temperate regions of Europe and North America. The colder areas nearer the poles of earth would unquestionably slow the growth of vegetation and prevent their scheme from completely succeeding but the tropic and temperate zones of earth could and would be turned into replicas of the Hotlands of Venus—steaming swamps where hot rain fell constantly, where weeds grew a foot overnight, where trees towered

hundreds of feet above the ground, reaching that height in less than a year. And—practically all of the cities of earth, all of the natural granaries, most of the sources of raw materials, were in the temperate zones.

THERE was silence in the room when Burger finished speaking. Mitsie seemed to have stopped breathing. Her face had turned as white as the face of a native of Venus. Anson had backed into a corner. Only Vardon was unaffected. He was thoughtfully watching Burger.

Burger was grinning. For the first time Parker understood the complex that motivated the geologist. He was a little man, and probably because of that, his dreams were Napoleonic. Once a man named Hitler had tried to subjugate the world. It was a breed that did not die out easily. Burger was another Hitler. If Burger's plans seemed impossible of realization, so in the beginning had Hitler's plans seemed the dreams of a madman. But they had proved none the less terrible because of that.

"In a way," Burger said, looking at Parker, "it is fortunate that I fell in with you. I have needed a man who is familiar with the operation of space ships. You will fill my needs. I will supply you with sufficient funds to go to earth and make a down payment on a liner. As to the other payments, you need not worry about them." He grinned again, like a rat deep in cheese. "They will not be made, once the ship is in our possession. You will return here with the ship, where you will receive further instructions."

His manner, his voice, was that of a fuerher delivering instructions to a subordinate, of a man who will brook no opposition to his plans. Somewhere deep in the little rabbit of a man was

a dictator complex. It was riding him now, riding him hard.

"No," said Parker bluntly.

"What?" There was no pleasure in the single word.

"You go to hell!" said Parker. "You will get no ship through me."

The grin vanished from Burger's face. Anger replaced it. For a moment the brawny captain thought the geologist was going to fly at him, clawing and scratching. Then Burger controlled his anger.

"I might mention that the rewards will be lucrative," he said. "Those who serve me will be well paid."

Parker shook his head.

"You mean that?" asked Burger doubtfully. "Remember I have means to force you to do as I wish."

"The hell you have!" the captain blurted out. "All you can do is kill me. I will provide you with no space ship."

He meant what he said. Then another thought occurred to him. Why shouldn't he pretend to agree to Burger's request, and when he reached earth, betray the scoundrel?

"You forget," Burger said slowly, "that I have a man by the name of Welsh, in my power. My surgeons are working on his injuries at present. They can either cure him or they can let him die. What they will do depends entirely on you. So just make up your mind, Captain Parker."

The geologist grinned again. Parker understood now why he had said he had a use for Red Welsh. He did have a use for him.

"I plan to keep him here until you return with the ship," Burger continued. "With him in my power, you will not betray me. If you don't do what I wish, Welsh dies. Also," he nodded toward Mitsie, "I have noticed that you have an interest in this

girl. While I would regret seeing so fair a flower perish, if you don't do as I command,—"

HE left the sentence unfinished but the captain knew what he meant.

"Tell him to go to hell," said Mitsie. "He's bluffing."

Parker flashed her a glance of gratitude.

"I'm bluffing, am I?" Burger questioned softly.

"You sure are," Mitsie answered. "You're not going to kill anybody. You haven't got the guts. And you're not scaring anybody with your threats. So you might as well put us in that helicopter and send us back to Venus City. We've got your number."

Her defiance was beautiful.

"Ah," said Burger. "I see that a demonstration is necessary." His eyes roved over the room, came to rest on the oiler. "Anson," he said.

The sailor had drawn back into a corner. He hadn't spoken since they had been brought here. When Burger spoke to him he started shaking.

"Anson, you were an associate of Reedy, were you not?" Burger said. "You were placed on the *Star Girl* to spy on me, weren't you? You were to discover what I was doing and then you and Reedy planned to blackmail me, didn't you? Ah—I thought so."

"N—no!" Anson gasped. "Mr. Burger, it wasn't anything like that at all. Reedy just said I should keep an eye on you—I didn't mean that. I didn't know what I was doing."

"Ah," said Burger in a satisfied tone of voice, "I'm glad you're here, Anson. You enable me to kill two birds with one stone. Not only do you provide me with a means of convincing this stubborn captain that I mean what I say but you enable me to demonstrate what happens to spies. *Guards!*"



Three of the Venusians stepped forward. With the courage of a cornered rat, the oiler struck at them. His resistance was futile. They knocked him down, dragged him to the center of the room.

"Executioners!" Burger shouted.

Into the room stepped two Venusians. Unlike the guards, they did not wear uniforms and instead of carrying weapons, they carried clubs. Burger silently pointed at the man on the floor and with equal silence they stepped toward him.

Crack! The two clubs descended as one.

Anson screamed in sudden pain. The blows from the clubs had broken both legs!

Smack!

PARKER had not known what was going to happen until it happened. The instant the clubs came down, he leaped. His fist connected solidly with the jaw of the nearest executioner, knocking the Venusian sprawling.

"Guards!" Burger yelled.

Instantly four of the guards leaped at Parker. He knocked the first one head over heels but the other three grabbed him. They made no effort to harm him but merely held him.

"All you have to do is watch," said Burger. He nodded at the executioner who remained on his feet.

Parker tried to break free from the Venusians who held him but they hung on like leeches and when he did not cease struggling, tripped him and piled on top, swarming over him until he couldn't move. He shut his eyes and wished he could shut his ears.

He could hear the executioner methodically wielding the club. Anson screamed. With two broken legs, he could not get to his feet. The executioner broke both arms, then methodi-

cally broke every other bone in the oiler's body. Anson's screams died into gurgling silence.

"Now," said Burger, "Will you get the ship I want or will you watch the same thing happen to Welsh and to Miss Jones?"

"I'll get your ship," Parker groaned. He was licked and he knew it. He could have faced torture himself but he could not stand idly by and see Red Welsh and Mitsie Jones beaten to death. That was what the executioner had done to Anson—beaten him to death.

"Good," said Burger. "I'll send you to Venus City in one of the helicopters tomorrow morning."

## CHAPTER VII

### The Horror that Walked by Night

"DON'T feel too badly," Mitsie Jones said. "You can't help yourself. That rat has you and if you don't do what he wants, he will simply have you beaten to death and get somebody else. Here, have a cigarette."

There were rings under her eyes and hollows in her cheeks. Her face was pinched and haggard. That came of watching a man die.

"Thanks," said Parker. He took the cigarette.

"If you really want to tell Burger to go to hell," Mitsie continued, "don't let his threat about me stop you. I'm not scared of the louse. And I'm not scared of dying."

"Mitsie!" Vardon gasped. The three had been placed in another, slightly more comfortable cell. "You don't know what you're saying. Burger means what he says. He'll have you beaten to death if—if you don't do what he wants."

She glanced at the hunter and casu-

ally blew a smoke ring. "So what?" she said. "So I have to die sometime and it might as well be now as later. Also," she looked at Vardon, "I thought I told you to call me Miss Jones."

"But—"

"Shut up," said Mitsie. She turned to Parker. "When you get to Venus City, you go to the authorities with what you know. They will check up on that colony on earth, and when they find you're right, hell will pop. Burger will find he has bit off more than he can chew."

Parker looked at her. He saw the hollows under her eyes, the pinched look on her cheeks. She smiled at him. There was no coquetry in the smile now. It was honest, and it came straight from the heart.

"You're a brave girl," said Parker. "If—" He checked himself. There was no point in saying what her smile made him want to say. If the situation was different— But the situation was hopeless.

With a soft click, the door of the cell opened. Tom Leek entered. He paused, his eyes going over the three of them. "Sir captain," he said, "I should like to talk to you."

"I suppose you came to make final arrangements for my leaving," Parker said bitterly. "Well, go ahead and talk."

"That is right," the Venusian said. "I came to make arrangements for you to leave—tonight."

"Tonight!" Parker echoed. "I thought Burger said in the morning."

"So he did," the Venusian suavely answered. "But if you are willing, plans have been made for you and your companions to leave tonight—without Burger's knowledge!"

**L**IKE a lion in a cage, Parker had been pacing the floor. The tone of voice in which Leek spoke, even more

than the words, brought him to an abrupt halt, his breath catching in his throat.

"You mean—" he choked.

"I mean, sir captain," Tom Leek said, "that among us, Burger has enemies. I mean that the time has come at last to defy him. I mean that, if it is possible, we plan to help you escape."

"But — " Parker whispered. He heard the words but somehow they did not seem to carry meaning to his mind. It seemed incredible that Tom Leek was offering to betray Burger.

"Years ago," the Venusian said, "we planted a colony on earth. At the time, I admit I was in favor of it. We even hoped to over-run your planet in years to come. Burger discovered our colony. He joined us, became in time our leader. But—we discovered that earth is not the same as Venus. The gravity is uncomfortable. Even in the tropics your planet is too cold for us. Your world has diseases to which we are not immune. Our first colonists died. We sent others. Eventually we were able to establish a small group there, but even with our storm lightning causing constant rain we were not comfortable. Some of us wished to abandon the venture. We didn't belong on earth and we wished to withdraw our colony. Burger wouldn't let us."

The Venusian paused and a look of anger crossed his expressionless face. "Those guards you saw, the ones in uniforms. Burger had given them titles, promised them wealth from the conquest of earth. They had become fanatically devoted to him. He owned them, completely. And when we wished to withdraw from earth, the guards upheld Burger. They killed many of us, put down all signs of revolt. We had no choice but to continue our attempted conquest, and to obey Burger."

Burger had adopted the old technique

of the dictators of establishing an elite guard, loyal only to one man, false to everyone else. When the Venusians had wanted to abandon their colonization plan, Burger had objected—and his guards stuck to him.

Was Tom Leek lying? Was this a trick, a trap?

"You were captured on earth," Parker said slowly. "Why didn't you warn the authorities? They would have stopped Burger."

"Because I wanted to save our colonists," the Venusian said simply. "If I warned your people, they would have been scared and angry. They would have bombed our colony, mercilessly. Our people would have been killed."

"But if you help us to escape, we will warn earth and the same thing will happen."

"We are helping you to escape on the condition that you keep silent, secure a space ship, for which we will provide funds, and make a secret trip from earth to Venus, returning our colonists safely. What is your answer, sir captain? If we help you escape, will you save our people now on earth?"

"Will I?" said Parker. "You're damned right I will." Making a secret voyage between earth and Venus would be on the illegal side, he knew, but to hell with that. He would be helping the Venusian colonists return home and they would not be likely to make another attempt. The letter of the law would be violated, but no harm would be done.

"When do we start?"

"Tonight," said Tom Leek. "I will come for you."

The door clicked shut behind him as he left the room.

IT was late at night when the Venusian, after leading them through inter-terminal dark tunnels, brought them to

an open square. Rain was pouring in sullen floods from a black sky, illumined by constantly recurring flashes of the swamp lightning.

"One of my men is in charge of the generator that produces the lightning," Tom Leek explained. "I instructed him to step up the flashes and cause a storm, thus giving you a better chance to escape."

From the open square came the *hush-hush* of the turning vanes of a helicopter.

"Everything is ready," the Venusian said. "We have brought your mate, Welsh, to the ship. Our surgeons have been working on him. They have bandaged his wounds and he has regained consciousness."

"Then let's go," said Parker. He was as tense as a cat that suspects the presence of an unseen dog. Their lives depended on what happened in the next few minutes. If the helicopter got safely away, Burger's guards would never be able to find them. Parker blessed the foresight of the Venusians for having set up the weather regulator to cause a storm. Flashes of real lightning were fingering through the clouds above them and thunder was roaring. Apparently the device that controlled the generation of what he had thought was swamp lightning was working very efficiently. They followed the Venusian across the square to the ship.

"Hi yah, Cap," a voice said from the cabin.

"Red!" Parker gasped. "How are you feeling?"

"Fine," Red Welsh answered. "These sawbones sure fixed me up. But what the hell happened, boss?" Welsh continued, in an injured tone. "While I was listening to the birdies a lot of things took place that I don't know about."

"Get into the helicopter," Tom Leek

interrupted. "There is no time to waste."

"I'll explain later, Red," Parker said. "Mitsie, where are you?"

"Here," the girl answered. It was so dark he couldn't see her but he felt her slip past him and into the ship. "Hi yah, Babe," he heard Red Welsh whisper. The words made Parker feel good all over. If Red was well enough to kid the girls, he was on the road to recovery. And with Welsh on the mend, with everyone escaping from Burger, well, everything was turning out all right. There would even be a new space ship to replace the *Star Girl*. A bag of jewels provided by Tom Leek from the treasury of the Venusians would take care of that.

"Are you inside, Mitsie?" he whispered.

"Yes."

"Okay. Vardon, you're next."

Although Vardon had once abandoned them, they were not leaving him here. Leek had nodded reluctant agreement to Parker's demand that Vardon be taken along. The Venusian apparently had his own ideas of what ought to be done with the hunter. Parker had his ideas too, but after all, Vardon was human, even if he wasn't a white man, and possibly deserved a better fate than being left here in the middle of the Venus swamps.

The hunter did not answer.

"Vardon! Where are you?" Parker hissed. "We're waiting on you."

It was too dark to see the hunter.

"Vardon!"

This was Tom Leek speaking.

"There they are!" said Vardon. His voice did not come from the spot it would have if he had been standing on the ground. It came from up above, from the dark bulk of a low building on one side of the square.

INSTANTLY, with the flick of a finger, a bright beam of light stabbed down from the roof of the building, revealing the helicopter, bathing Tom Leek and Parker in a blaze of brilliance.

"Good work," Parker heard Burger say, from the roof. "I'll see that you are rewarded for this, Vardon." Instantly Burger's voice changed. "You, down below. My men have you covered. Surrender or I will order them to fire."

Vardon had betrayed them. He had taken advantage of the darkness and had slipped away, warning Burger of the attempt to escape.

"Damn!" Parker raged. "I should have killed that heel!"

He was burning with anger. Knowing what Vardon was, he should never have trusted the man. But he had trusted him. And this had happened.

"Hands up!" Burger snapped. His voice was harsh. "My men will shoot you down like rats."

"Do we surrender?" Parker quickly whispered to Tom Leek.

"For you, to surrender will be all right," the Venusian answered. "For me, it will mean the clubs of the executioners."

The guards knew how to handle a Venusian who was opposed to them. Break his legs, so he can't run; break his arms, so he can't crawl. Let him lie in agony for a while, as a lesson to others. Then break his head. This would happen to Tom Leek.

"Then to hell with surrendering!" Parker snapped. "We'll fly this kite out of here. Jump in the ship, Tom Leek. We're taking off."

The Venusian did not wait to ask questions. He dived headfirst into the cabin of the helicopter. Parker was right behind him. With a single motion, he shoved the throttles wide open. The vanes were already turning. Instantly they began to bite the thick air,

to pick up speed. The ship was sluggish. But it began to rise.

On the roof top a machine gun began to rat-tat-tat in the night. Slugs bit into the craft, ripped through the cabin, drove through the whirling vanes. The helicopter dipped crazily, then shot into the air. The beam of the searchlight followed it. So did the bullets from the machine gun.

"Give here more juice, Cap," Red Welsh said calmly.

"I'm already giving her all she's got," Parker answered. He was aware that Tom Leek had opened a window and was leaning out. He caught a glimpse of the Venusian throwing something.

Crrump!

There was a thumping explosion down below. The searchlight went out abruptly and the machine gun stopped clattering.

"Burger called them hand grenades," Leek explained, closing the window. "I—ah—appropriated one from his armory. They certainly make a loud noise when they go off."

"You get a cigar," Red Welsh said. "You can also pitch on my baseball team. What I mean is, as a thrower, you're tops. Cap, give this rowboat the gun," he said to Parker.

THE helicopter was lifting raggedly. Apparently the slugs from the machine gun had got to it somewhere but they hadn't got to it enough to keep it from flying. Up into the lightning illumined night it went, up and away, vanes spinning. Parker's heart rose with it. They were above the hills now. The flashes of lightning were below them.

"You did it, Cap," Red Welsh yelled exultantly.

Rat-tat-tat-tat! Above the whistle of the spinning vanes the sound came,

above the drumming of the rain on the cabin. A dark shape hurtled out of the night, rushing toward them.

It was another helicopter. And it was armed with a machine gun. Tracer bullets were gouging grooves of light in the darkness, swishing like a scythe of death, coming closer with every passing second.

Parker spun the controls of the helicopter, sent it into a spin. Somewhere in the far distance, it seemed to him, he was aware of a woman screaming. That was Mitsie, he thought. Her nerves had failed at last. He didn't blame her for the scream. She had been through hell, was still going through hell, and would go through more if he couldn't dodge this attacking helicopter.

*Thwuck!* A tracer bullet drove through the instrument panel in front of him. Sparks splashed. A stream of fire spouted up. He slapped at it with his bare hands. It went out. He spun the controls. The ship didn't answer. Spinning crazily, it was falling out of control. The vanes were turning slower now.

The bullet that had struck the instrument panel had smashed the controls. The ship was falling. Lightning was dancing around it. It fell through the lightning zone.

One beautiful thing about a helicopter is that the vanes will keep it from falling too fast even if they have no power. They act as air brakes. The ship spun crazily. It was unmaneuverable. It struck the hillside within a hundred yards of the gray stone tower from which the lightnings radiated.

For an instant, after the ship struck, there was stunned silence. Captain Parker couldn't move, he couldn't think. In his mind a miserable dirge was beating—he had failed. Even in the darkness, Burger and his guards would soon find them. The guards would bring

clubs—

"All out," Red Welsh said. "End of the line. All passengers please disembark."

In spite of himself, Parker grinned. Nothing daunted Red Welsh. They crawled out of the wrecked ship.

"Do we have a chance?" Parker asked Tom Leek.

The Venusian did not answer. Above them the lightning was flashing continuously. Rain was pouring from the sky. And a wind was beginning to howl through the mad darkness.

"Burger brought machine guns from earth," Tom Leek said slowly. "He armed his guards with them. They also have strong lights. The storm will make it difficult for them to find us but they will hunt us down in the end—"

HE sounded hopeless, like a man whose heart has given out and who is only waiting for the end. In all that he said Parker heard only one word, a word that rang a bell in his mind, reminding him of something Tom Leek had said previously, reminding him of his memories of earth. On nights like this on earth, when there was rain and wind and lightning, farmers and dwellers in lonely places went to storm cellars, fearful of a horror that might come through the darkness. Suddenly Parker was shaking Tom Leek and screaming at the top of his voice. "You said your people cause this storm, by increasing the intensity of the lightning. Answer me one question, Tom Leek, answer me one question—"

He shouted his question.

The Venusian stared at him. "Once I saw such a thing, when I was on earth," he said. "They do not exist here naturally. I do not know whether we can create one or not."

"But we can try," Parker shouted. "We can try. If we can kick up enough

hell Burger and his boys will be too busy to look for us. While they are saving their own necks, there is a chance in a thousand we can get to Vardon's tank and make a getaway."

A second later he was running up the hill. He was carrying Red Welsh and Tom Leek was carrying Mitsie. Driving rain was splashing in their faces. Wind was roaring through the trees. Down below them, in the Venusian city, lights were moving through the darkness as Burger and his guards began to search for them. The lights moved straight toward the hill where they were climbing.

There were two Venusians in the stone tower. One of them was a friend of Tom Leek. He admitted them. The other was promptly tied up. Swiftly Parker explained to the Venusian what had to be done. The native's normally white face turned even whiter when he understood.

"It is our only chance," said Tom Leek.

"Very well," the Venusian said. "Once something very like the thing you describe happened here. But we managed to stop it in time. I do not know what would have happened if we had not stopped it." His face was as white as milk as he turned to do Parker's bidding.

FROM a round window in the tower of stone Parker watched what happened. He saw the lights form a circle around the hill and begin a thorough search of the underbrush. One cluster of many lights moved slowly up the hill. That was Burger and Vardon, and Burger's guards, directing the search. Parker's lips came together in a straight line when he saw them. They knew he was here on this hill somewhere. Would his plan work? He listened. That was how he would know his plan

was working—by the sound. He heard the wind roaring past the tower.

"How long will it take, Cap?" Red Welsh asked.

"God knows," Parker answered.

The circle of lights was closer now, moving up the hill. Suddenly they found the helicopter. Lights clustered quickly around it. Then they began to move straight toward the tower.

"They've found our tracks," Parker swore.

He was listening. There was a rumble in the distance. Was it what he was hoping to hear? The artificial lightning of the Venusians was fingering outward in a continuous flare. Natural lightning created by nature was splashing through the darkness. Thunder was rolling back and forth between the hills. Somewhere in the distance was a grumbling roar.

All of the lights were moving toward the tower. Burger was there, and Vardon, and dozens of the guards. Even the two executioners with their clubs, were on hand.

Tom Leek came into the room. "My comrade requests me to tell you, sir captain, that it is happening."

His voice was calm but his face was as white as paste.

Parker heard it roaring. Like a thousand freight trains running wild in the night, it was coming, coming, coming.

Burger and his men heard it. The lights ceased moving toward the tower. They stopped, clustered in a circle. Suddenly they began to run—down the hill.

The roar in the night went down the scale, played a crescendo in bass, and grew louder. Suddenly the tower began to rock.

"My god, look!" Parker shouted.

Freight trains were running in the night, thousands of freight trains, each with two locomotives. Every locomotive

had its whistle wide open. And every freight car had square wheels. The roar was a terrible blast of sound smashing at the ear drums. And it was growing louder.

Lightning was flashing continuously now. The scene outside was as bright as day.

Burger and his guards were running down the hill. Sweeping after them was a gigantic twisting funnel. It seemed to be made of smoke. It was bigger at the top than at the bottom, and it was black as midnight, as black as death. It was picking up trees, Venusian giants, two hundred feet high, and snapping them like match sticks. It was mowing a swath down the hill.

It struck the running lights. And the lights went out!

It didn't pause in its stride. A thing that could gobble up trees two hundred feet high would not find a mouthful in a man. Or in two men. Or in two men and a dozen Venusians, including two brawny executioners. They didn't make a good bite for this horror of the night. They didn't even sweeten its teeth. It gulped them up, swallowed them whole, spat them high into the air. They fell as dismembered limbs, as broken, torn bits of flesh. It caught them as they fell. They didn't have a chance, the ghost of a chance. It chewed them into grime.

Then it went racing on into the night, surrounded by lightning.

"CAP," said Red Welsh hollowly. "When you mix up a batter of tornadoes, you sure do a good job of it."

"I didn't hope that this would happen," Parker whispered. "All I thought was that if they turned on the juice full force up here, they would cause a tornado. If they could make a storm, they could make a tornado too. A tornado would keep Burger and his boys so busy

we would have a chance to escape. But I never dreamed they would get caught in it. My god—" His voice whispered into silence. He was awed at what he had seen happen.

"I might mention that they deserved it, sir captain," Tom Leek said. He had regained his composure but no trace of color had returned to his face. "They had defied the gods and the gods turned against them in the end. Your planet and my planet will be better off when all such men are dead."

From the stone tower the lightning had ceased to flash. Rain was falling outside, rain in a flood, but it was a gentle rain now, driven by little wind. Off in the distance the tornado was disintegrating. Somewhere off there in the distance bits of flesh that had been Burger and Vardon were falling with the rain.

It was broad bright daylight the next morning when the three of them emerged from the building where they had spent the night. Venusians were clustering around them, Venusians who dared to smile. Yesterday they had not smiled. But today was another day.

A helicopter was waiting in the square, its vanes slowly turning.

Tom Leek helped them enter it. "You will obtain the space ship, sir captain, and bring our colonists back from your planet?" he asked.

"I certainly will," Parker answered. "As soon as Red gets well enough to serve as mate."

"I'm ready right now," Welsh answered. Parker scarcely heard him. He was thinking of the ship he would have. The *Star Girl* was gone. But there would still be the Parker line. That was enough for Parker. Or almost enough. He looked at Mitsie Jones.

"You know," he said thoughtfully, "everybody who was on the *Star Girl* had some reason for being there, except

Vardon. Was he lined up with Burger all the time?"

"No," said Mitsie. "He was after the only trophy he didn't have—the great bear of Venus. He was probably the only passenger on the ship who had an honest reason for being there."

"The only one?" Parker said, still looking at her.

SHE faced him. There was no make-up on her face this morning, no rouge, no lipstick. But somehow her complexion was better than it had ever been before, her eyes a deeper blue. "Yes," she said, "the only one."

She hesitated, took a deep breath. "You remember what Anson said about me, that he had seen me working in a dive in Venus City? Well, he was telling the truth. I had been working in a dive—as a waitress. But I got tired of being a waitress. So I did what thousands of other girls have done, bought myself some fine clothes and started on the man hunt. I admit it. If Vardon was after big game, I was after Vardon. He was a millionaire and he could give me the things I had always wanted and couldn't have. . . ." She was very near to tears. "I didn't know anything about men. I had seen his pictures in the paper. How was I to know he was such a heel?"

She shrugged. "All right," she said to Parker. "Now you know the truth. I was on the make." The tears came. Defiantly she wiped them away.

"So you were on the make for a millionaire?" said Parker slowly. His memory went back to the things this girl had said and done, how she had refused to accept a seat in the tank, how she had kept her chin up and her courage high when everything was going against her. In the only language Parker knew, it was deeds that counted.

"Yes," she said. "I was on the make



for a millionaire."

"Well," said Parker slowly, "would a space captain do?"

The tears in her eyes were replaced by stars. "Mister," she said. "I don't know anyone else who will *ever* do!"

Red Welsh had witnessed this scene. He had seen all he could stand. "Come on and get in this flying buggy," he said gruffly. "I'll pilot the darned thing and you two can lallygag all the way back to Venus City."

## « « SCIENTIFIC ODDITIES » »

KA—CHOOOOOOOOOOO!

THAT time-worn nursery rhyme in which you are advised to "Speak softly to your little boy and beat him when he sneezes," might not, medically speaking be a bad idea. It has been estimated that the germs "whooshed" forth in sneezing, coughing, and often in talking, sometimes stay alive for as long as two days afterward.

This is, of course, direct refutation of the old theory that germs passed under such circumstances had to be inhaled directly as they emerged into the atmosphere. Even though some of the larger germ drops do sink rapidly to the floor immediately after expulsion from the sneezer or cougher, the smaller—and far more numerous—germ drops evaporate almost immediately. This results in nuclei being left in the air currents which sometimes carry them far beyond the ordinary range of infection.

PAPAVER SOMNIFERUM

THERE are many of nature's tricks which are often, to say the least, contradictory. Take, for example, the drug nicotine, the active principle of tobacco. If taken by itself, it's a deadly poison; yet it can be smoked with perfect immunity.

But even more astounding is the performance a plant known as the species *Papaver somniferum*—a poppie plant to you, but the only poppie plant from which opium can be made.

Opium is obtained from the unripe fruits which are incised with a guarded knife to allow the juice to exude. This juice, when dried, forms the opium of commerce which is used chiefly in the form of its alkaloid morphine to relieve physical suffering.

But strangely enough, the seeds of this plant are commonly used on cookies and buns, to give an added flavor. Remember that the next time you ask for "poppy seed bread."

CALLING EMILY POST!

THE next time you get a nasty look from someone—he it relative, in-law, or hostess—for a slight breach in table manners, it might be a good idea to remind them that scientific statistical analysis has shown that not more than one third of the people on earth today eat with the knife and fork. Further investigations reveal that a little less than a third eat with chopsticks, and that the remainder, a proportion larger than either of the other two groups, still sticks to the simple fashion of eating with the fingers.

AGAIN THESE CLEVER CHINESE

IN MANY homes in China today, it is still a custom to worship a deity called the "kitchen god," whose picture is prominently displayed in the house. It is the task of the kitchen god to keep watch over the goings-on in the household and keep track of the general conduct of the family.

On New Year's day—when his twelve month observation has finished—the family burns his picture so he can go to his heaven and turn in his report on their behavior. If, however, the family is sure that their conduct is none too good, and that the kitchen god might turn in a bad report on them, they soak his picture heavily in wine before burning it. Then they sit back confident in the knowledge that their wrongs will not be squealed on, inasmuch as the kitchen god will not be allowed to enter his paradise in a drunken condition!

PARADISE FOR MOTHS

A LARGE upholstery manufacturing company keeps a "moth room" which contains an incredible number of moths, moth eggs, and larvae. Here in this exclusive dwelling place for Mr. and Mrs. Moth, they and their friends are fed the finest brands of animal yarns, and are constantly supervised for their comfort and further eating jobs.

The idea behind all this, of course, is to let Mr. and Mrs. Moth do some good for a change by testing the various processes developed to defeat their outside brethren's attacks on mohair and other furniture upholstery. It's worked out with enormous success, and with none dissatisfied except the moths who can't get into this paradise.

CORRECT AS A COMPASS NEEDLE

ONE of the most widely spread misconceptions is that concerning the accuracy of the Magnetic Pole. For centuries it has been celebrated in song and story as the criterion of certitude, accuracy and infallibility. Every school child old enough to use a compass thinks he is pointing unerringly to the Pole when he gestures in the direction of the compass needle.

Actually he is 1,500 miles off. For it is an established fact that the Magnetic Pole is 1,500 miles south of the true North Pole and approximately 97 degrees west longitude.

# The Return

**The robots who were masters of Earth wanted to learn emotion. So they gave Smithjohn a sword—and a girl!**

As a naked, specimen in an empty cage, Smithjohn's eating and sleeping and nervous pacing had attracted great numbers of robots to the World Anthological Gardens during the first few weeks of his captivity. Then interest in him had fallen off and even the mechanics who were admitted to the Anth at night had paid little more attention to the man than they did to other captive life forms in the Gardens.

Soon after robot Xan 2 Q took charge however, Smithjohn had noticed the difference in the treatment given him. His dingy cage had been remodeled,

given air and light and provided with the artifacts and accoutrements supposed to have been used by his ancient forebears in the Early Psychozoic Civilization. With these changes, his popularity as a showpiece rose and soon he was the prize of all exhibits.

But the robots were not interested in the man merely as an exhibit, for he was an extraordinary opportunity for research.

The raw meats and fruits, which had always been his diet, changed and were hardly recognizable in the strangely compounded and heated forms which



# of Alan

By  
**LEO A.  
SCHMIDT**

Smithjohn stood staring for hours at a time, leaning on the sword, Excalibur



the robots served him.

By far the most irritating experience through which the bewildered Smith-john was put came one day when three of the white mechanics, who were always used for actual labor, entered his cage. Evidently acting on the brain control of Xan 2 Q, who stood outside, the three grappled with him and after a short struggle, pinned him to the floor.

Not since his capture many months ago on that reckless exploration beyond the safe limits of his native mountains, had he felt the robots' direct physical force. Momentarily he resisted but their strength obviously increased as his resistance was felt.

Then to his perplexed discomfiture, with much pulling and twisting of his

agonized body, the mechanics pushed his arms and legs into sheaths of strange materials which they fastened to him with straps and ties. Soon his entire body, except for hands and face, was covered with fabrics of various textures.

**I**N the ensuing days, the struggle was repeated many times until Smith-john learned to tolerate the irritating strictures of his garments as less than the evil of constant hopeless combat with the powerful mechanics.

The greatest step in the re-education of Smithjohn was the discovery by the scholarly Q3 IQ of the possibility of intelligent communication with the captive. After several weeks of intensive effort in which the man found himself

Dear Editor:

In a recent time trip of mine (to 63482 to be exact), I was doing some browsing in the geolo-historical institute and picked up the following all-time chronology table. The early parts tied in so closely with what my own 1915 text (Pirsson & Schuchert—Historical Geology) had shown that I copied out the whole thing and smuggled it back with me. Maybe your readers would be interested in it.

#### ALL-TIME WORLD CHRONOLOGY

The unrecoverable beginning of earth history.

*Archeozoic*—Age of unicellular life.

*Early Proterozoic* } Ages of primitive marine in-  
*Late Proterozoic* } vertebrates.

*Paleozoic*—Age of amphibians, lycopods, fishes, shelled invertebrates.

*Mesozoic*—Age of reptiles.

*Cenozoic*—Age of mammals and modern floras.

\**Psychozoic*—First Age of Man.

\**Robotozoic*—Age of robot ascendancy.

\**Stabilozoic*—Age of final stabilization.

\* These three eras together constitute the historic period and it is doubtful whether geological historians should recognize them as distinct eras, since except for the sixth glacial period in the middle 10,000 years of the Robotozoic, the only significant changes have been cultural rather than diastrophic.

Possibly the more detailed subdivisions of these periods as recognized by robot and subsequent historians would be of interest. I have recalculated the zero-billion year chronology into the time scheme of our era to make it intelligible to

your readers.

#### Psychozoic:

50000 B.C. to 1900 A.D.—Early struggles.

1900 to 2100—Comic era; succession of world dictatorships.

2100 to 4000—Golden age.

4000 to 4800—Age of Decadence; preclusive metaphysics; progressive mechanization.

#### Robotozoic:

4800—approximate date of first general utility mechanical device, i. e., true rudimentary robot.

4800 to 11500—Robot growth and development.

11500 to 11700—Robot struggles for supremacy.

11700—Battle of Robomageddon — slaughter of man.

11700 to 52500—Robot ascendancy.

#### Stabilozoic:

52500—Approximate date of Man's reconquest.

52500—to indefinite future—Age of stability.

(By the year 63482, the time of my visit, the average earth temperature had cooled 1½ degrees.)

I was intrigued by the 52500 date and read all I could about the specific events surrounding "man's reconquest." The records were rather sketchy, but I got enough out of them so that I can assure you that the enclosed "historical short" is quite accurate in its facts, though the names and personalities are, of course, fictional.—Leo A. Schmidt.

co-operating with the robot in the fascinating project, a series of vocal signals was developed which soon ripened into a complete system of speech.

Through speech there were opened to Smithjohn the tremendous vistas of the robots' knowledge. While hundreds of robots lined the galleries in fascinated observation, the strange education progressed. Geography, geology, history; above all history! The cold exact intelligence of Q3 IQ revealed the secrets of ages to the avid, grasping mind of the human, now after thousands of generations released from the savage existence of the Voltz Mountains cave country.

A second great milestone in Smithjohn's education was his introduction to the written learning of his ancestors, when Q3 IQ began providing him with the glass-preserved books from the Museum Biblioteque. Though the robots had no need of a written language, according to the mentor, their anthropologists had long understood in a general way, the uses of the writings which they so carefully caused to be preserved. Their captive gave them the first opportunity of centuries to pry deeper into man's relations to written records.

For Smithjohn, the task was a rare delight, for he soon sensed that herein lay the key to the ancient glories of his race—the glories so dimly but persistently hinted at in the legends of his people.

How often in his youth, as the lesser chiefs had gathered about the fire in his father's great cave, he had listened enrapt to the songs of the old man! The songs told vaguely of times when men had been masters; when they had dared to travel as far and in what direction they had wished; when even the great plains which they would see from their mountain fastnesses on clear days were not forbidden them.

Sometimes, after the songs, he had plied his father with questions. Were the stories real? Had there been such a time when men had not cowered in the protection of the caves of the electric mountains? What *was* the great danger which lay beyond the cliffs and ancient ramparts which none had dared to violate in the memory of man? His father had only been able to say:

"I do not know, my son. Be not so inquisitive, it does not become the son of a chief. We must build the ramparts ever higher so that none of our people may ever go to the great evil beyond them."

But a spark of ancient courage, smoldering under the ashes of eons of fear, had glowed brighter in the breast of this youth and he had made his resolve.

On the first day that he was free from the mother-obedience of childhood, the morning after the rites which made him a man, Smithjohn had ventured on his fateful exploration. For days he had climbed and toiled his way along the boundary where most men shivered with the dread of the unknown. And then on the morning after the great storm, he had come upon that bright new crevasse opening steeply downward through the cliff. Smithjohn, the son of the chief, had ventured where no man had gone before him for a hundred generations; down to the forbidden plain below.

ONE, two, three years went by and still the man-scholar was a captive. The robots continued their interest in him as a research phenomenon and in their cold experimental way, supplied him with all the needs of his rapidly maturing mind. Between the man and Q3 IQ, his chief mentor, there developed an intimacy which might have been termed a friendship if the robot,

with all his intelligence, had been capable of the slightest emotion.

"We have completed our study of your emotions," said Q3 IQ one day. "The history of your people shows clearly that emotion was a factor of tremendous force, surpassing at times even the influence of sheer intellect. We find in emotion a possible device for improving the effectiveness of our robot race."

"But do you know its composition so that you can reconstruct it as you now do the intellect when you create new robots or recreate yourselves?" questioned Smithjohn.

"We believe we understand it fully and have at present under reconstruction, a group of 1000 mechanics whom we are in-constructing with a somewhat simplified form of emotion. The process is similar to the in-building of instinct brain-paths, except that the singular sinapse paths are replaced with labyrinthian sinapse crossings. Our test brain models have reacted in form and the present stage is just a matter of correlating the new brains with the full physical robot. In 72 hours, the models will be ready for trial."

A few days later Q3 IQ again reported to Smithjohn.

"Our experimental emotion-robots are a failure, but we are aware of the nature of our failure. Emotion in the single individual is sterile of action until a communication of the emotion wave from individual to individual can be effected. This we have been unable to study in you, except as we have gauged the emotional pull exerted by the memory and in the direction of your former abode and kind."

"If there were others of my kind here, then you could soon analyze the transfer phase of emotion and perfect your experiments," said Smithjohn. "I propose that you free me to return to

the magnetic regions, to bring forth from their protection several others of my people. You could then study as as a group and your problem would be solved."

The gleam from Q3 IQ's light-sensitive area stepped up several degrees.

"It does not take the equipment of emotion in myself to understand your purpose in that suggestion, my fine young fellow. My pure intelligence easily recognizes your not-so-brilliant plan of escape. I could sense the pulse of strong emotion as you thought you could trick us into letting you go.

"But your idea is worth considering. I will order an attempt to capture a companion for you and with our increased knowledge of your kind, we may succeed." \*

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\* The robot's last attempt to invade the mountains of Smithjohn's people was made in 52298. They sacrificed thirteen hundred mechanics at that time in various experiments to overcome the brain-fusing effect of the magnetism in the iron ore crags.

Robot intellectual activity is fundamentally electrical passage in infinitely small charges through the billion to the nth ganglia of their brains. The ground magnetism existing in certain areas of the earth, though extremely small as measured instrumentally, constitutes a veritable hurricane of force to a robot brain and fuses the sinapses into a single circuit. Thus subjected to magnetism there occurs in the robot brain, instantaneously and continuously, all possible thought, rendering the robot entirely and permanently imphysical and impotent.

Robot control of atomic force enabled them to supersede the clumsy and dangerous electrical devices of the early ages (1170-13200) with entirely safe and amenable methods and processes. Practically all natural electrical manifestation in the 98% of the earth's surface which they occupy has been grounded. The 2% area comprising the Voltz ranges, sector to the earth's center, has become the depository of nearly all natural magnetism and thus inaccessible to the robots and for the same reason, the sanctuary of Smithjohn's people.

The once proud race, the sapient genus Homo, lived miserably and savagely in these dank mountain caves and the seemingly immortal robots created long ago as the servants of his ancestors, ruled all else with an apparently unbreakable power.—L. A. S.

AS DAYS and weeks went on Q3 IQ informed Smithjohn that robot engineers had succeeded, with specially designed atom bombardment streams, in destroying great sections of the ramparts with which his people had supplemented the natural crags of their mountain fastnesses. The robots, of course, could not penetrate the magnetic regions but they had set up an intricate system of outposts to catch any other human who might venture by accident or otherwise beyond the wrecked ramparts.

Smithjohn visualized the terror of his people at the destruction of their self-imposed prison walls. Undoubtedly they had retreated at the first sign of the attack which they could not understand, let alone resist. By now they would be largely massed in the caves of the extreme interior.

That anyone of them should ever venture voluntarily out to the plains and thus risk capture as he had done, seemed highly unlikely. The traditions and taboos of uncounted generations would now be reinforced by new fears engendered by actual evidence of attack. From time immemorial, fear of the outside had been not a trait to be despised, but an eminent virtue. Who, of all his acquaintance, might possibly have the temerity to defy such odds and venture forth?

While he awaited the outcome of the robot's plans, the captive was not idle. Day after day, he read eagerly through glassed books from the ancient libraries. The histories fascinated him, from the earliest extant writings of what the contemporary writers called the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with their cosmic wars and successions of world dictatorships; through the golden age of reason, when mankind had come of age, conquered nature and seemed grown at last to a full mental stature. \*

And then early one morning, Smithjohn heard the rumpus he had long feared for the noisy clattering of dozens of the usually orderly robots could mean but one thing—the expected new captive had arrived. The man watched eagerly through the bars of the adjoining cage to see what luckless specimen was to be his companion in captivity.

Suddenly he saw the new captive still struggling viciously against the hopeless odds of a white mechanie's strength. With a surge of pity he realized that the new victim was a girl, her panting shrieks told him that, even before he glimpsed the golden hair that was knotted in the mechanie's grip. Naked as she was, he could see from the bruised and bloody splotches which marred the golden-white skin of her body that she had put up a terrible fight.

The mechanie brought her forward to where Smithjohn stood and jerked her erect before him.

Lyllia! Little fair haired Lyllia, for whom he had fought so many battles with the boys in his youth and toward whom he had had such strange feelings in those distant times.

As he spoke her name, her struggles ceased momentarily while she stared at him.

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\* This era was followed by the slow onset of decadence visible during the forty-first century in the exclusive concern of great masses of people in the still unsolved mysteries of metaphysics, the declining interest in things physical and the greater and greater reliance on mechanization of the necessary life functions. Toward the end of the forty-eighth century, there appeared the first general utility mechanical device consolidating the functions of hundreds of special machines. This was the end of what robot historians call the Psychozoic and the beginning of the gradual robot advance.

After the excitements of robot conquest of man, the period of robot ascendancy, now far advanced, is singularly uninteresting—a long succession of improvements on themselves invented by the robots. Their immortalization by sectional repair made new creation and demise obsolete and robbed their world even of the thrill of death.  
—L. A. S.

"Smithjohn?" Unbelief and hope fought in her quavering voice and then were overcome by new terror.

"No, no, it isn't you! They have made you into one of them. They will do it to me!"

Instantaneously he sensed her difficulty—his garments, which he had forgotten for the moment, made him look to her like a strange creature—like another mechanical device with only head and hands of a human. Quickly he jerked off his coat and shirt.

"Lyllia, Lyllia! Look at me, it is Smithjohn, your friend! Slowly she overcame her fears.

LATER in the day, the man convinced his captors that quiet and protection from the leering crowds of robots were necessary for the new specimen. The two captives were allowed together in the quarters so long occupied by the man alone.

Undoubtedly the research robots were at their observation posts, watching every move and sound that was made, but they had not yet taken the precaution of learning the natural language of man, so the two were safe at least to talk. Curled in Smithjohn's comforting arms, the frightened and tired new captive told her story.

"After you disappeared, we knew you had gone out beyond. Our builders blocked the shiny crevasse to which we had traced you and I was so lonely. I tried to find a way to follow you but the ramparts were so very tall.

"Then when the great storms came and smashed so many walls and killed so many guards, the rest all fled to the caves. I didn't care for the danger, I wanted to die just as you had died—by going out to the unknown. And so, here I am. And—and—Smithjohn, can we ever get back to our people?"

"My little dear, there is hope. I have

learned so much. We are men. Ours is a noble race. The old songs are true. We once were the masters; and all of them, our creatures, our servants!"

Lyllia felt a strange note in the voice which was speaking. It was a human voice, such as she had heard since she was a child, but the quaver of fear was gone and in its place there was something hard and firm. She glanced up at the face above her and it was the face of her beloved Smithjohn, but something had gone and something had taken its place. The muscles of the jaw were tense, the teeth were gritted and the eyes seemed to flash.

As she watched, he spoke again and the firmness in his voice was like shiny steel.

"And by the Gods of all ages, we will be masters again! Do you understand, Lyllia? We, our people, will reconquer our ancient heritage!"

One man, physically not a match for a single mechanic, caged, dependent for his very food and drink upon his captors, with the vision to declare for the conquest of a billion robots! Such were the odds. But beside him stood the woman, the thrill of whose nearness had set the fire of conquest in his blood!

AS THE weeks wore on, Smithjohn and Lyllia gave evidence to their captor-researchers of the emotions of friendship, comradeship, mutual faith and understanding and of love on the highest of planes. Under Smithjohn's instruction, Lyllia learned many things. While the robots watched, the man and woman read and studied. While Smithjohn delved ever deeper into science, especially physical and biological electronics, Lyllia devoted herself to the literatures of bygone times.

The two were given every encouragement in their studies and furnished with everything they wished for their ex-



periments and amusements except that the general robot safety laws made it impossible to furnish the man-scientist with any of the materials or equipment he so desired for research, and re-discovery in the fascinating fields of electricity and magnetics.

For their own amusement, Lyllia accumulated complete sets of clothing and properties mentioned in the dramas and poems of the early days. And when the golden-bodied daughter of the ages clothed herself in the garb of an eighteenth century queen, the robot researchers were delighted.

Best of all, Lyllia liked the heroic tales of armored knights who fought against tremendous odds and saved their ladies and kingdoms. The stories of King Arthur were to her the acme of interest and she plagued the captors until they built for Smithjohn a suit of mail and provided him with a sword, Excalibur, whose

—haft twinkled with diamond sparks,

Myriads of topaz-lights, and ja-cinth-work

Of subtlest jewelry."

Among the robots, the serious work of in-constructing their experimental mechanics with the equipment of emotion went on. Q3 IQ who was in charge confided his progress to Smithjohn.

"I have found it necessary after emotionalizing my mechanics, to reconstruct my own brain with the complementary emoting capacities. We have not considered it wise to connect the inter-emoting phase among the mechanics as yet, so in order to get action, I have established my own control direct to the mechanics."

"And have you found the new traits effective? Do the mechanics show evidence of emotion?" asked Smithjohn.

"Certainly, though to date I have worked only on the fear-control," re-

sponded Q3 IQ, "A group of one hundred mechanics at extreme power labor showed a forty percent increased production as soon as I played the fear-of-consequences wave upon them, even lightly. As soon as our sending and receiving waves are fully tuned in, I feel sure of getting a several hundred percent response on fear alone."

After Q3 IQ had left, Lyllia turned quizzically to her companion.

"Smithjohn, do you think that you or I—" But the man signaled suddenly to her for silence.

THAT night Smithjohn stood in a shadow and watched the cleaning squad of mechanics, some of whom he had guessed were among Q3 IQ's group of emotees. Concentrating on one of them, the man gritted his teeth and mentally called down the imprecations of the ages upon his luckless head. Instantaneously, the frame of the poor mechanic snapped into convulsive activity. Twice he whirled around and then darted straight away from Smithjohn, down a short corridor and directly through the solid masonry wall at its end.

Smiling to himself, the man retired to the room where Lyllia lay waiting for him.

"Come to me, my Lyllia," he said, "I have earned the privilege of a kiss."

Whether or not the robots learned the exact cause of the hole in the Anth House wall and of the slightly crumpled appearance of M 14,629 was not immediately apparent, but the next morning it was significant that an entirely new set of mechanics displaced those previously used about the place. Smithjohn was downcast, lest his reckless experiment may have shown his hand too soon.

Q3 IQ's visit that afternoon was a revelation. His manner was radically

changed, even his voice showed very un-robotlike tension as he spoke.

"You ingrate, you unthankful bit of man-flesh. Here I confide in you and treat you, a caged beast, practically as an equal and then you dare to interfere with my experiment by asserting your own emotion control over that defenseless mechanie."

The robot stopped, a perplexed gleam shone from his eyes.

"Why, I have even descended to emotion-hate for you—and I can feel your emotion-hate and yours is very strong!" Precipitately, he left the quarters.

Troubled days followed for Smithjohn and Lyllia. They knew that Q3 IQ recognized the danger of the man's strong emotion. They knew that Q3 IQ now hated them and feared them. They know that the tradition of intellectual accomplishment, accentuated now by the pride-emotion would push the robot-scientist to any length in perfecting his experiment of artificial emotion-control over the mechanies and eventually over all the robots.

"Well, let's play King Arthur and the sword again," said Lyllia. "I know it soothes your feelings to revel in the glories of the past."

And so while the usual crowd of sight-seeing robots looked on, the two went through their reading and acting. Lyllia was worried by Smithjohn's apparent listlessness. When they finished the reading, she studied him thoughtfully. As he stood on the great rock, he faced the west and the rays of the setting sun glorified his thoughtful profile. He held Excalibur, the great sword, loosely in his hand, its point slanted toward the ground before him. Lyllia noticed again the nervous habit he had lately manifested. With the great garnet in his ring, he was tap, tap, tapping the steel blade of Excalibur as though

fascinated by the sound.

ONCE again Q3 IQ visited his captives. But the manner and actions of the master-minded robot were shockingly different from his original quiet scientific demeanor. Surrounded by a bodyguard of mechanies, he advanced into the room with an overbearing swagger and roared out one command.

"Silence all! It is Q3 IQ who speaks!"

A luckless working mechanie allowed a tool to fall with a clatter.

"Slay him!" the possessed robot shrieked. The command, which had been unheard for thousands of years, was immediately put into action by the hammers of hate-emoting mechanie guards. Other robots stood stunned in their tracks, uncomprehending, while their fellow was pounded to useless wreckage.

The frame of Q3 IQ vibrated with the surge of emotion generated within him by the scene. Domineering hatred and the lust of power fought with the excruciating thrill of sadism in his over-emoting brain.

It was obvious to Smithjohn that the robot scientist had built into himself emotion-power of such a super-phase that all co-ordination with his mental and physical makeup was threatened.

Now Q3 IQ turned toward the captives.

"But I will not kill you two—yet. You're to be my guests, my appreciative audience, the witnesses as I, I, Q3 IQ take over all power, smash down all opposition, rule all the robots with my one great mind!"

"You have shown me the way. From you have I learned the art of emotion. From you have I learned the joy of power. From you have I learned the ecstasy of others' sufferings. And when I rule all the robots, when the last one

has been chained by my iron will, then I shall return to the final pleasure of all—the rack, the chain, the fire, the screaming torture of sentient human beings. You, my captives, who have taught me all this, shall honor my conquest with the agony of your bodies.

"And if you think, my little man, that you can resist me in any way, it will but add to my pleasure to see you fail. Your careless adventure with my emotee the other evening tipped your hand beautifully. Your puny one-man power emotion against my fifty-fold power! Ha! And I can step it up to one hundred or one thousand at will!"

IN the ensuing days, Q3 IQ seemed on the way to make good his threats. His thousand emotees with their accentuated power, smashed all resistance before them. The great robot populace of World City with thousands of years of experience to guide them, had only one defense, intelligent logic. Against the hammers of the lust-inspired mechanie emotees, logic and reason were less than thin air.

To the thousand original emotees, Q3 IQ was adding by the tens of thousands to speed up his world conquest. Fiendishly he added to the mental torture of the humans by sending them hour by hour reports of his progress.

"All members of the Garden Staff have been smashed."

"The World City Council of One Hundred has been captured and sent through the depair department, reducing their brains to mechanie level."

"All communications and transport workers have been put through field alteration stations and are under full emotion-control of the Master."

One report caused even greater consternation than the others.

"New research discovers practical magnetism insulator. Machines for

final conquest of Voltz Mountains being constructed." To this report, Q3 IQ added his own personal message: "I may let you two live to see the last few thousands of your own people captured and put to death delightfully, thanks to your help."

Smithjohn fumed and raged and tore at the bars of the cage. Without the calming influence of Lyllia's companionship, he would have destroyed himself by the sheer agony of his helplessness during the days when he knew that the maniac robot's conquests were being pushed against his fellow men. Out of sympathy for them, he and Lyllia had again discarded the clothes and gadgets of their ancestral civilization and reverted as nearly as they could within their artificial quarters to their own early mode of living.

But the great sword Excalibur, Smithjohn did not discard. Constantly he had it in his hands, gesturing and posturing, flexing its shining blade and tapping it to hear the ring of its perfect steel. Lyllia supposed that in some vague way, it had come to stand in his mind for the tenuous hopes for future of his race.

WITH a bluster and commotion that was highly unlike the quietude of their early days of captivity, Smithjohn and Lyllia were led under heavy guard of emotees to the great new amphitheatre which the tyrant had caused to be built. Judging by the roar and commotion about them, this was to be the great day for which they had been saved—the day of final torture.

From high up in the approach gallery, Smithjohn glimpsed the vast assembled throng, and the shudder which ran through Lyllia's form as she clung to him, told the man that she, too, had seen what they had feared most of all.

Below in the great arena were huddled together thousands of cringing, frightened men and women—their own kind—their very kin.

A haunting feeling that the scene was familiar obsessed the man. Ah, yes! His history readings—the so-called Christian Era. Nero, a petty tyrant of those days; and again on a far vaster scale—the days of the world dictators; and still far later, the massacre of man, man by the millions when the robots took over by force after the battle of Robomageddon. That was the final dreadful affair from which those few remnants of once proud man, his ancestors, had escaped to the erstwhile safety of the magnetic mountains.

Now it seemed that the final, postponed chapter in the decline of man was about to be written. Q3 IQ knew his history, too, and in his infinite cruelty, had planned this scene as a fitting climax to the long, long story.

But the cruelty of the tyrant was not to be satisfied by the mere torture and massacre of the pitiful horde, nor even by the delight of forcing his favorite captives to witness the awful scene before they, too, should fall. In his diabolical genius, the tyrant had planned the ultimate of mental sadism.

Sitting upon the great dias, he caused Smithjohn and Lyllia, skillfully and inconspicuously gagged and shackled, to be escorted in and seated with pomp at his sides. To the horror-numbed thousands below, this show could mean but one thing; their own flesh and blood, the son and daughter of their own leaders, had betrayed them into this. For there they sat, in honor at the sides of the tyrant.

A deep groan from the depth of a thousand souls down there in the pit, passed slowly into silence—the bitterest moment in the story of the human

race.

To Smithjohn and Lyllia, fully aware of the meaning of that deep silence, the moment was one of utter anguish.

"And now," said Q3 IQ, drinking the dregs of the scene with maniacal relish, "You, Smithjohn, will rise and as your people look at you, you will raise that shiny sword of yours, point toward the zenith and then lower its point to the ground. Thus you will yourself give the signal for the executioners to begin their work. The guards who stand beside you and support you in such princely style will see that your trusty hand shall not fail to obey my orders."

**S**MITHJOHN was raised from his seat. His arms were held in the vise-like grip of a mechanic at either side. Slowly the great sword Excalibur was elevated to the zenith.

Sensing the moment of doom, the thousands in the arena arose and stood in quivering silence.

Smithjohn took a long deep breath and then just as the mechanic at his right began to force his sword arm downward, he gave a superhuman wrench which tore him free from even the iron grip of the robots. Wheeling with lightning speed toward the tyrant, he brought the sword in a long sweeping curve forward until its tip touched lightly the forehead of the master robot.

The result was instantaneous. From every aperture in the head of the robot shot blue flame. The cranial dome burst asunder and the molten interior flowed down over the shoulders and chest.

The magnetism in the fine steel of Excalibur, so carefully induced from the last faint magnetic traces of the earth's own force field by Smithjohn's thousands of tappings in months gone by! This magnetism, faint though it

was, had done its work. The hyper-phase delicacy of the emotion mechanism with which Q3 IQ had in-built his own brain, had obviously to be even more sensitive electrically and therefore even more vulnerable to magnetism than the delicate brains of the common robots.

Stark, sudden pandemonium broke throughout the amphitheatre. Released from the brain and emotion control of Q3 IQ, but subject to the enormous tension of the last few moments, the thousands of robot emotees began to react in an indescribable confusion of violence. Terrible shrieks, insane laughter, great leaps, horrible wild thrashing about with their ever-present hammers, and vicious attempts to gouge and tear one another to pieces! All this with the furiously accentuated strength of their emotions run wild.

HERE was a danger which Smithjohn had not foreseen. In that welter of violence, the defenseless humans in the pit would perish as certainly as if the plans of the master robot himself had been fulfilled.

Even the royal guards were caught in the uncontrolled pandemonium and were smashing right and left all around the dias. Smithjohn drew Lyllia to his body, and swinging the sword upon the first robot who charged, stopped him in his tracks.

Before he could turn, however, another insane guard swung with his hammer and hit the man a glancing blow on the head.

As Smithjohn sank to his knees, Lyllia threw her lithe body over him to

ward off the next blow which would have crushed any human body.

"Smithjohn, I love you, I love you, I love you." Her agonized cry rang above the riot.

The blow which could easily have dispatched the two of them never fell. A strange perplexed inaction had overcome the robot who was about to wield the hammer upon them.

Groggy as he was, Smithjohn sensed the change in the robot. Immediately, he leaped to his feet with a shout.

"Love! Love! Love!" As his voice rang out, the tumult nearest the dias quieted down.

"Please! Peace! Quiet! Order!"

Strained to the utmost, his voice carried into the milling tumult to the sides and in front of the dias.

"Take up the cry," he ordered, "Peace! Quiet! Silence! Obedience! Cease your struggles! You love one another!"

Gradually his cries were taken up and soon they spread in a great wave about the amphitheatre. "Love! Peace! Quiet!"

With Q3 IQ gone, there was but one other possessing high intelligence and emotion control. Smithjohn, in his own person, held the key to the actions of the thousands of robot emotees and they held unquestioned control over the millions of others.

A great silence settled over the scene.

"You will remain exactly where you are, in peace and kindness to all your neighbors, until I give you further orders." The voice of the man rang triumphantly.

"Excalibur!"

#### STRANGE CONVOY

CLEVER people these Chinese, cleverer even than Walt Disney. For among the thousand and one funny situations in which Hollywood's greatest cartoonist has placed Donald Duck, he's never thought of using the popular bird as prac-

tically as the Chinese river dwellers along the Yangtze River. It seems that said river dwellers harness flocks of ducks, sometimes more than a hundred in a group, to their large rowboats, using the quacking webfooted creatures to tow them for distances as long as ten miles upstream!

# THE IMMORTALITY OF *Alan Whidden*

**The strangest of all strange things happened to Alan Whidden; he became his own grandfather.**

**by RALPH MILNE FARLEY**

A BROAD-shouldered athletic young man with wavy black hair stood before the painting "Prometheus Bound" in the Metropolitan Art Museum.

The picture portrayed the Titan hanging in chains on the face of a cliff, while a vulture tore at his vitals. On the Titan's face the artist had caught an expression of spiritual exaltation mingled with intense physical pain.

The young man who stood in front of the painting studied it for a few moments; then shook his head resignedly.

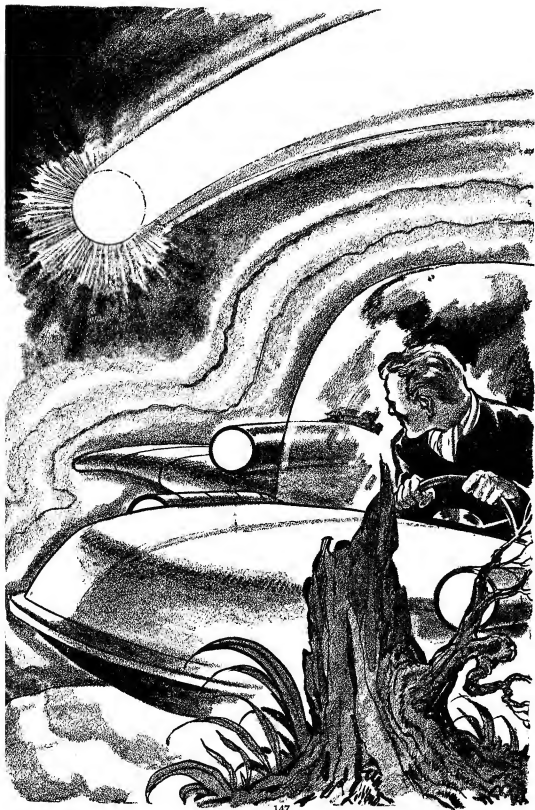
"It's no use, old fellow," he said.

"I'm not in your class. You gave the human race the priceless boon of fire, which you snatched for them from the very dwelling-place of the gods. For that act of impiety, you were sentenced to an eternity of torment, your liver forever growing and forever feeding that bird of prey. Yet you were willing—glad even—to pay the price. I too have snatched secrets from the gods for the benefit of my fellow men. But, unlike you, I am *not* willing to suffer forever. Forever!"

The young man was Alan Whidden, scientist. Although he was only thirty

The sun was a flashing  
band across a gray sky





years of age, fully half his life had been crammed with scientific research. There was hardly a field of modern science to which he had not richly contributed. And yet *his* name would *not* go down in history—no-one would ever portray Alan Whidden as a Prometheus. For he had had a passion for anonymity.

Framed on the wall of his laboratory were two quotations. One from Dwight Morrow, reading:

"The world is divided into two classes: those who do things, and those who get the credit for what others do. Try to be in the first class. There is much less competition."

And the other from Seneca:

"He who expects gratitude has not conferred a favor."

So Alan Whidden had permitted others to reap where he had sowed, content with the realization that his was the contribution to the world's welfare. In fact, so intent was he on accomplishment that he had never paid any attention whatever to securing any credit for himself. He had found this policy to be a real aid to accomplishment, for it made collaborators out of those who would otherwise have been competitors.

One invention, and one only, had Alan Whidden kept strictly to himself, namely immortality; for he felt that immortality could become a curse, rather than a blessing, if made freely available to the common run of mankind. And now it had become a curse to him himself.

**BY** A long series of experiments on guinea pigs and other animals, which had had as their purpose the more prosaic object of learning the cause of old age, Whidden had stumbled upon the secret of eternal life. A simple operation on the thymus gland of a young animal, or even of an adult

which happened to retain this gland merely atrophied instead of absorbed, not only put a stop to the aging process, but also apparently rendered the creature immune to death.

Suffocation, poisoning, dismemberment of guinea pigs thus treated, had failed to kill them. In fact, the impregnation of their bodies with the secretions of this altered endocrine gland, made possible the speedy rebuilding of the amputated limb or excised organ, just as in starfish and other elementary animals.

Even the eventual removal of the altered thymus itself did not seem to put an end to the efficacy of the original operation!

As a final test, Whidden crushed one of the poor little guinea pigs to an amorphous bloody pulp; yet the pulp had continued to live on, writhing and pulsating in agony. Even this shapeless mass might in time have been recreated into the form of a perfect guinea pig; but Whidden, taking pity on its pain, had put an end to its sufferings by cremating it. Did the dry and apparently dead ashes live on? It seemed incredible, and yet the young scientist had had a gruesome uncanny feeling that it might be so. He shuddered, as he subjected the remains to the further devastating effect of a searing white heat, that reduced them to a mere gaseous emanation, to nothingness.

At length, convinced that he had in truth discovered the secret of physical immortality, Alan Whidden had then had the thymus operation performed on himself, so that he might devote his own life in perpetuity to the service of the human race. Of course, he did not tell the surgeon the purpose of the operation. The surgeon was a man who had been the putative father of many of Whidden's biological dis-



coveries, and had grown wealthy thereby; so he had the tact not to ask, lest he destroy the goose that laid the golden eggs.

Fortunately—so it seemed—Whidden's own thymus had been found to be intact, though atrophied, and so the operation had been a success.

But, now that he was irretrievably immortal, he had had the dire misfortune to become afflicted with cancer of the liver, an incurable disease. How reminiscent of his idol and prototype, Prometheus!

Incurable? Nothing was incurable, nothing was impossible to the master mind of Alan Whidden. With the stake of his own future now added to his heretofore scientific curiosity and love of humanity, the young scientist turned all his attention to a study of the nature of cancer, and to finding a cure for it. The first point was easy for him—an explanation so absurdly simple that it had eluded the grasp of all his predecessors in this field. From there on, the discovery of a cure became almost automatic—all that remained was to develop a technique.\*

ALAN WHIDDEN was well along in this development, when the sudden realization dawned on him that this gnawing enemy in his midst, being part and parcel of his own being, was possessed of the same immunity to destruction as was the rest of him.

Stunned and staggered by the full force of this fact, Whidden abandoned this line of research. The doctors to whom he had made a present of his results to date in this field, were capable of carrying on the work where he had

left off. But, so far as he was concerned, half-crazed by the gnawing at his vitals, and by the even more excruciating spiritual pain of this, his first scientific defeat, he now viewed the whole experiment with loathing.

He sought consolation from the portrait of Prometheus in the Metropolitan Art Museum, because of the similarity of their cases—but Whidden did not possess the spiritual greatness of his predecessor.

He thought of suicide, the death for which even the Titan Prometheus had prayed, and which Jupiter had finally granted him. But Whidden realized with a pang that, having made himself immortal, even as the Titan had been immortal, the boon of death could come to him only as a gift from the gods. He prayed, as Prometheus had prayed; but no death came.

Then the unconquerable will, which had enabled him to surmount every problem thus far in his brief but spectacular scientific career, suggested a way out. He rigged an incinerator, in which he could lie down to sleep under the influence of a painless odorless gas; and which would then, and then only, subject his unconscious body to such superheat that every cell of his being would be reduced to gaseous nothingness, as he had reduced the poor crushed palpitating body of the immortal guinea pig.

Yet there was a lurking doubt. What if, even in the gaseous state, consciousness might return to an eternal pain so intense as to transcend all human anticipation. The memory of the cringing formless mass of bloody protoplasm that had once been a carefree little guinea pig, returned again and again to haunt him, and he too cringed with fellow-feeling.

The completed incinerator was set aside for the time-being, to await the

\* The details of Alan Whidden's discoveries in this field will be mailed to any inquirer, upon request addressed to the author in care of this magazine, accompanied by a stamped return envelope.—Ed.

day when the gnawing of the immortal cancer at his immortal liver should become more terrifying than the unknown future of a gaseous existence.

NOW that Alan Whidden had made up his mind to destroy himself eventually, his thoughts turned for the first time in his career toward getting some credit to himself for some monumental accomplishment. The very utter destructiveness of his planned method of death, the sinking himself without a trace, made it suddenly seem imperative to him that he should leave behind him at least a memory that he had lived.

What field should he tackle for this supreme achievement? Cancer? No. He shuddered at the thought. Besides, others with his consent were already in position to claim the credit for winning nine-tenths of the battle.

One other biological project suggested itself. He had always planned to relieve mankind some day of the most prevalent curse of ordinary routine life, namely shaving for men. But he invisioned this line of research as requiring more time than he might find available.

In search for a suggestion by analogy, he catalogued the really great discoveries of all time: fire (which his friend Prometheus had brought), the wedge, the inclined plane, the wheel, the hollow boat, cooking, agriculture, the domestication of animals, the alphabet, Arabic numerals, steam, electricity, the atomic theory, and the electronic valve. As his scientifically trained mind reviewed this list, he was impressed by the fact that several of the items related to pure mathematical physics, that several others related directly to transportation, and that still others had contributed to transportation.

"I shall apply mathematics to the problem of transportation," he resolved.

His thoughts flashed to the Einstein theory. Whidden knew the old gentleman personally—had, in fact, contributed several ideas to Einstein's next forthcoming paper on generalized relativity.

Gravity, Einstein had explained as being merely a warping of space-time in fifth and higher dimensions, in the vicinity of masses of matter. Alan Whidden himself had supplied the older scientist with the following two-dimensional analogy—Whidden was good at analogies. Stretch out a thin sheet of elastic rubber, Whidden had suggested, and place upon it a number of metal balls of various sizes and weights. Each ball, in proportion to its mass, will distort this two-dimensional rubber sheet into the third dimension, just as gravitating bodies distort our own four-dimensional space-time into higher dimensions. The balls on the rubber sheet will roll together, just as masses gravitate together in our familiar space.

The idea now occurred to Whidden: "If I distort the rubber sheet by some other means than the metal balls, as by poking my finger into it, I will have thereby created an artificial gravity. If I move this distortion along, by running my finger along ahead of one of the balls, the ball will follow my finger. Why not then artificially distort space in advance of a space ship, and thereby pull the ship along after the distortion, at any desired speed?! It will be like holding a carrot on a pole in front of a mule's nose, to induce him to move."

WHIDDEN took a brief run over to Princeton and discussed the idea with Albert Einstein. The latter disagreed quite emphatically, but could not formulate the reasons for this disagreement. Being a true scientist, Ein-

stein's ideas always developed first as pure hunches, and then required months of abstract research for their formulation, to be followed by years of observation and experiment for their verification.

But Alan Whidden could not wait for all this. His malady was piling up on him like figures on a taxi-meter. Being the same sort of true scientist as his mentor, he too plunged into a mathematical analysis of his hunch; and when he believed that he had deduced the correct formula for an artificial space-wrap, he set about producing it in his laboratory, preferably by electricity.

He found the way. He built a small model space-ship. He was able to cause it to set up a disturbance ahead of it, which would make it gravitate in that direction, its tail held down by a piece of rope. Substituting a spring-balance for the rope, he was able to measure the force of the pull of this artificially induced gravity, and thus learn the law of its strength. Also he found out how to direct the pull in any direction around the little model—this would be useful in steering and stopping his full-sized ship when built.

In his intense interest in this new project, Whidden had almost forgotten his malady, in spite of its frequent twinges of pain. But he was lonely with a terrible loneliness which grew on him at a faster rate than his cancer.

His New York laboratory was not large enough for the assembly and test of his life-sized space-ship. So he bethought himself of a recently vacated tenant-farm in the town of Holderness, New Hampshire, which he had inherited from his father when the latter had died in the World War. The older Whidden had been born in Holderness, and had once owned considerable estates there, but this farm was all that

now remained of the family holdings. Alan too had been born there, but the family had moved to New York when he was a mere baby, and he had never revisited the scene of his birth.

Holderness was an easy day and a half's run from New York. Whidden motored up and reopened the old farm; and his apparatus followed after in several large vans. He found the empty barn to be ideal as a hangar for his space-ship. The farm was on the south side of Little Squam Lake about a mile from the village (known in local parlance as "the Bridge").

WHILE working on his ship, Whidden occasionally spent some time gossiping with old-timers, picking up the lost trends of his family history. To his surprise, he found that his grandfather, for whom he himself had been named, was still remembered with considerable respect. Alan had always instinctively hated his grandfather's memory, for all that he knew about him was that he had apparently hounded a very sweet and beautiful wife to death, and had then deserted his infant son (Alan's father) by leaving on some harebrained sort of trip to some foreign land, from which he had never returned.

But now Alan learned that the old man, although for many years hard and shrewd in his dealings in money and land, by which he had amassed considerable wealth, had ended up as a most kind and considerate creditor of those debtors who still remained in his clutches. Also in his latter years he had developed quite a lot of mechanical and technical ability. Exploits of his, such as mending a broken windmill with a mere bit of baled hay wire, were still talked of. And strains of thoroughbred cattle and sheep which he had introduced, were still pointed

out. Perhaps it was from Alan's grandfather that Alan had inherited his scientific ability and his passion for service.

Alan began to have for his grandfather a sneaking admiration, which however he strove to suppress; for Alan had had an intense and devoted love for his father, the only individual who had ever meant anything to him in his entire busy life, and he could not forget nor forgive that Grandfather Whidden had deserted Father Whidden in the latter's infancy. This unpaternal act remained unexplained.

Alan grew to love this little New England community, to realize that it contained a friendliness, a wholesomeness, which New York City could not offer; and that the simple homely things of life were as important in their way as the marts of trade and the laboratories of science. The time of year was early spring, and the summer folk had not yet arrived in droves to line the shores of Squam and Little Squam, and look down upon the rustic natives who despised them equally.

At last Alan Whidden's space-ship was completed. None of his neighbors had known of its existence, had not even known that the big barn on his farm contained anything other than his automobile. His preoccupation he had explained as working on a book—a learned book on the Riemannian space-time manifold, which the gossips around the stove in the general store at the Bridge explained as being some kind of a newfangled gadget for an automobile.

Late one afternoon, clad in overalls, he wheeled his ship out of the barn onto a level pasture. Starting-up the powerful diesel engine which it contained, he clutched-in his generator. When all was idling nicely, with one hand on the steering-stick which was

universally mounted to direct the craft up, down and to either side, Whidden gingerly slid the controller-handle forward one notch.

By rights, the ship should have started slowly crawling across the field; but it did not budge.

WHIDDEN returned the handle to neutral, and sat for a moment in deep thought. The sun had been shining on his right when he got into the machine. Now it shone on his left. This fact feebly tried to obtrude itself upon his consciousness, but did not quite succeed in getting past the threshold, so engrossed was he in mentally running over the wiring of his machine. Finally he left the driver's seat and checked everything with voltmeter and ammeter. Everything seemed to be okay. The diesel engine and generator were still humming nicely.

Once more he took the seat, and again moved the controller a single notch. Instantly everything turned black—he could see nothing. He slammed the handle back to neutral. All was light again. He rubbed his eyes and glanced around outside the ship. The sun was just setting in the west as it should be. Everything seemed normal.

He resolutely moved the controller one, two, three notches. No motion of the ship; but a gray half-light as on a cloudy overcast day, although a few minutes ago the sky had been clear. A sickening indescribable hollowness in the pit of his stomach ensued, as he flopped forward in his seat, forcing the controller to its furthest notch.

When he came out of his faint, and sat erect once more, and blinked his eyes, and stared about him, the space-ship still remained standing motionless in the pasture. The sky was still gray, but with a golden band stretching across

it from east to west, and this band was slowly swinging from north to south and then back again.

With horrible presentiment, Whidden yanked the controller to neutral, and slumped in his seat in another dead faint.

When he came out of his second faint, the sun was high overhead, and the day warm. Whidden shut off the engine and got out of the space-ship. He hardly recognized his surroundings. The field where he stood was no longer a cultivated pasture, but rather was a place of wild grasses and barberry and juniper and rocks. The barn and farmhouse were gone from the nearby knoll.

Yet this must be the same spot from which he had started, for there before him lay the placid waters of Little Squam, flanked and backed by well-remembered coves and hills.

Whidden sat down on a nearby boulder, cupped his chin in his hands, and gave the situation the most intense thought that he had ever devoted to any scientific problem.

"Let's see," he mused. "I warped space-time ahead of the ship, and—Um. My little model worked all right. I wonder if, by any chance, in changing the size and shape of the ship,—I have it!"

He snapped his fingers, and his tense features relaxed into an engaging grin.

"When I selected the electric equipment for my ship, I used a current with lag-angle ninety degrees different from that of the current in my little model. I bet that this has substituted negative time for space in my results; so that, instead of traveling forward in space, I have traveled backward into time."\*

He cogitated for a few minutes more.

"Then, if I were to try to travel backward in space, I could travel forward in time."

Then he scowled, and shook his

head.

"But no. How silly of me. Time bears the same relation to *any* space direction as to any other. *Any* attempt to travel in space whether backward or forward, would be certain to push me further into the past."

He drew himself wearily up onto his feet. Then his grey eyes narrowed and his firm jaw became set. Finally he grinned.

"Got to go down to the Bridge," he announced to the surrounding countryside, "and find out what year it is. Gosh what a pickle for a man to be in!"

HE headed across the fields, up over the crest of Sherwood Hill, and down through the woods to Holderness Bridge. None of the summer cottages which had dotted Sherwood Hill were now to be seen, and the woods were much thicker than he had ever known

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\* Alan Whidden's explanation of his predicament is undoubtedly the correct one. It is well known that, in the equations of the Riemannian space-time manifold, the fourth dimension is not simple time, but rather is time multiplied by  $i$ , the square-root of minus one.

It is also well known that, in dealing with complex quantities (such as  $it + s$ ), multiplication by the square-root of minus one is equivalent to a ninety-degree shift. Multiplying  $it + s$  by  $i$ , changes it to  $is - t$ .

It is also well known that when an alternating current is doing work, the pulsations of amperage lag behind the pulsations of voltage, or vice versa, by what is known as the "lag-angle." Impedance, such as a coil or an induction motor, tends to introduce a negative lag-angle. Capacity, such as a condenser, tends to introduce a positive lag-angle.

It is not so well known that a small model is likely to have a negative lag, whereas a large-size machine is likely to have a positive lag.

Alan Whidden found, by his laboratory experiments, that a lag of forty-five degrees was required to set up the artificial gravity-disturbance which he wanted. In his model, he used a negative lag-angle of that amount. In his large machine, he found that his lag was positive, and unthinkingly set it at *plus* forty-five degrees.

This ninety-degree shift changed the entire nature of his disturbance, and thus sent him hurtling backward through time, instead of forward through space.—Ed.

them to be, although not containing such tall trees. The stores at the Bridge were fewer but in better repair. The filling-station was gone, as were the many wharves and boathouses which had lined the narrow river which flowed in from Big Squam.

The general store now bore the name "NATE WHIDDEN"—some relative of his doubtless; he vaguely recalled having heard of his grandfather's cousin Nate. The proprietor, a man with red sideburn whiskers and square-lensed glasses, was seated on the long low front piazza of the store, his feet on the hitching-rail, reading a newspaper.

As Alan Whidden clad in overalls, approached, the reader glanced up over the top of his paper, grinned a crinkly-eyed grin, and remarked,

"Well, Squire, I didn't think you'd be working today."

Whidden did some quick thinking. "He called me 'Squire'. He thinks he knows me; but he's a total stranger. Must mistake me for someone else. I must watch my step." Aloud he said in a deferential tone,

"Sorry, sir, but my name's not 'Squire'. I'm—the new hired man of some summer folks over by Shepard Hill."

"Ain't you Squire Alan Whidden?" The face of the man on the store-piazza was incredulous.

Alan Whidden! His grandfather's name, as well as his own. So *that* was it! Aloud Whidden said,

"Sorry, sir, but my name's Jones. Bill Jones. Mind if I take a look at your paper?"

As the man handed over the newspaper, and Whidden leaned against the hitching-rail and stared at the date-line, the man said,

"It's yesterday's paper. Well, you sure do look like Squire Whidden. And I reckoned it war plum funny you war

working right after your son war born this mornin'. You say your name's Jones? Any relative of Iry Jones over to the White Oak Pond sawmill?"

Whidden vaguely shook his head. For his mind, in a whirl, was piecing together the date, August 5, 1890, and the man's statement that this day a son had been born to another Alan Whidden. For on August 6, 1890, Whidden's father had been born here in Holderness, and Whidden's father's father had been named Alan!

**T**HANKING the man and handing back the paper, Whidden turned and staggered away from the store. As he crossed the bridge he passed two men who eyed him keenly. One of them muttered something about "Alan celebrating a bit too much." The other one guffawed and they passed on out of earshot.

Alan pulled himself together, drew himself erect, and turned into the road that led up to the side of Sherwood Hill.

Stranded in time, he was back when and where his father had just been born. A pang smote him, but it was a pang of the heart, not of his disease. His father, the only person in the world whom he had ever loved taken from him by a German bullet in the World War when he himself had been but a boy of nine, and now miraculously restored to him. He would stick around until night, and try to get a glimpse of the babe that was to be his father. And then what? How could he live in this strange world of used-to-be, with no assets other than a back-tracking time-machine, without even a name or an identity? The only solution seemed to be to travel even further back to an era when his own superior training would give him an opportunity to earn a living by his wits until he could re-establish himself.

Perhaps he could even solve some of the unsolved problems of history. But then he reflected what good would this do other than personal satisfaction. For he would become a mere contemporary of many other persons who would know the solution as well as he.

Meanwhile what about food? For although he was immortal, a fact which he had almost forgotten, he could still feel the gripes of hunger as acutely as any mere mortal. So he groped in the pockets of his overalls, and found his purse. Plenty of money for food for a few days: six or seven dollars in change.

But every coin, except one 1881 fifty-cent-piece, was yet to be coined—bore a date later than 1890. The copper ones were quite valueless, the silver ones could be melted up some time and sold for thirty-five cents on the dollar—or thereabouts—but for the present, his total available wealth was just exactly four bits.

Alan Whidden smiled grimly to himself, as he wheeled about, and strode resolutely down the wood road again, to Holderness Bridge and Cousin Nate's general store. There he bought a half-dollar's worth of crackers, smoked meat and preserves — the canned goods of that era seemed very crude and limited. Then he hurried back to his space-ship (which had turned out to be a time-machine instead), ate some of his provisions, and watched the sun sink into the west.

**I**N the twilight of evening, Alan hurried back to town. He knew well the low rambling farmhouse on the shore of Big Squam Lake a half mile or so north of the Bridge — the ancestral home of his family where his father and he had been born—for he had visited it several times in the spring of 1940 while building his space-ship, and had even gone all through its rooms with

the permission of the then owner. He did not believe that it would look very much different now, in 1890.

It had changed but little, though the summer cottages which had hemmed it in in 1940 were now conspicuously absent. The house was newer looking and had one less ell, the fence was different, and the yard was better kept, but Whidden had no difficulty in recognizing the place.

The twilight deepened. Black night fell. Whidden sneaked into the yard, circled the house, and peered beneath the shade of each lighted window in turn.

From one room came the high-pitched lusty "Waw! Waw!" of a few-hours-old babe. In a big four-poster double bed lay a young woman, her tawny hair spread out in disarray upon the pillow. Her back was toward the window, and so Whidden could not see her features, but he considered her hair to be the most gorgeous he had ever seen.

On the further side of the bed stood a woman in nurse's uniform, and a portly kind-faced man, evidently the doctor. The nurse was holding the squalling child, and Whidden thrilled as he realized that this child was destined to grow up to manhood, and in due course of events become Whiddens' own father.

Whidden's beloved father, twenty-two years dead and buried in Flanders Fields, now miraculously restored to him as a little child.

The woman in the bed held up a pair of slim beautifully moulded arms, the nurse placed the baby in them, and its wailing ceased.

The doctor smiled; but there was an intense, almost grim, set to his jaw, and his narrowed eyes never left the figure on the bed.

Whidden turned from the window, groped his way across the yard, and plodded down the road to town and

thence through the woods to his space-ship sitting on the vacant field beyond Sherwood Hill.

He felt let-down, depressed, after his brief moment of exultation. What now?

He wanted desperately to stick around and watch this babe, his father, grow to manhood. Why not bum his way down to Boston, and look for a job. With his scientific ability, with his 1940 knowledge, fifty years ahead of the times, getting and holding a technical position should be easy, even with the depression of 1892 about to break upon the world. Why, he could even play the stock-market short, with the sure foreknowledge of that depression! He could bet and win huge sums on the outcome of prize-fights and presidential elections!

But some subconscious feeling of danger warned him against living in an era in which in about nineteen years hereafter (his father had married young) he himself was about to be born. He might run across himself, and that would never do. Why not? He made no attempt to reason-out his instinctive abhorrence for such an eventuality.

No! He would travel back still further, perhaps to Revolutionary days.

A pain gripped his side, and he fell writhing to the ground in one of the worst seizures which his malady had ever given him. When it was over, he lay weak and nauseated and wringing wet with cold perspiration, in the darkness.

THAT spasm determined him. He must die, must utterly destroy himself, before his disease became too unbearable. He must get a job at once, and earn money enough to build a duplicate of that combined lethal gas-chamber and incinerator which he had left behind in 1940. The further back in time he went, the more difficult would

it be for him to obtain the necessary materials for this project; so he must stay here in 1890. But he must leave Holderness at once, leave his infant father to the mercies of the man who—so family tradition related—was about to desert the child so callously.

Whidden got heavily and dizzily to his feet in the darkness. Damn his grandfather anyway!

With that thought the solution of all his difficulties dawned upon him. If his own father had never lived, then he himself could never have been born. To kill his father now would prevent his own birth—snuff himself out instantly. But he could not bring himself to kill the only person he had ever loved. He cringed at the very thought.

However, he had no qualms about killing his grandfather, a man whose memory he had always hated, for the unexplained desertion, now about to take place.

Travel back just one more year, and destroy that other Alan Whidden. Prevent himself from ever having existed. Of course, this would also prevent his father from ever having existed. But why not? His father's life had not been a happy one. Deserted as an infant, a hard youth, an early marriage which had turned out to be a brief one, and then an agonizing death on the fields of France, torn by shrapnel and choked with gas.

One shot from a pistol could avenge a family wrong, prevent his father's suffering, and put an end to his own.

His face alight with concerted purpose, he climbed into the space-ship, started the diesel engine, clutched in the generator, and notched the controller, one notch forward. Light, darkness, light, darkness . . . Whidden kept count of the rhythmic pulsations; and when they totalled three hundred and sixty-five of each, he restored the



lever to neutral.

One more flash, and it stayed light. It was—or should be—August 6, 1889. Midafternoon by the position of the sun. Whidden shut off the engine and dismounted.

He lunched in leisurely fashion on the rest of the crackers, dried meat and preserves, which he had bought yesterday—or a year in the future, whichever way you choose to look at it—at the general store at Holderness Bridge. Then as the sun began to set, he took the forty-five caliber automatic which was part of the equipment of his ship, thrust it into one pocket of his overalls, and hiked once more to town. He felt light-hearted, elated. His pulse beat fast, and a sort of intoxication sped through his veins.

"I've mastered time," he spoke aloud to the birds and woods, "and now I'm about to master fate. Neither time nor immortality is irreversible."

WHEN he reached the center of town, he was in such high spirits that he impishly decided to let some people see him and wonder who he was. And there was a practical consideration behind this impishness—he must make certain what day and year it was before he did his deed.

So he strode into Nate Whidden's store, with a broad grin on his face, and his grey eyes twinkling. Ten or a dozen men were sitting around chatting. As he entered, their conversation came to a sudden and abrupt stop. All eyes focused upon him, as the men cringed and shrunk away from him. It was as though a cat had stalked into a group of rats, who had then crouched watching the intruder with beady eyes, intent for her next move. There was hatred in those eyes, hatred as well as fear. How different from the friendly greeting which he had received the last time

he had visited this store.

Alan Whidden flashed an engaging grin around the group, but the tenseness did not slacken. He shrugged his broad shoulders, leaned against one of the counters and picked up the daily paper—yesterday's he assumed. The date was August 5, 1889. So today was the sixth. He had counted the flap-flap of days and nights correctly.

He glanced up and around. Beady eyes still watched him intently. This was absurd. Nightmarish.

"Scamper to your holes!" he shouted.

A look of incredulous amazement suffused all their faces. Alan wheeled around toward a man with red sideburn whiskers and square-lensed glasses, whom he recognized as the proprietor of the store.

"Cousin Nate," he said, his grey eyes narrowing dangerously, "if I were to die, who would inherit all my mortgages?"

"Why—why—," Nate stammered. "Why, Squire, it would be me, of course."

"Then why don't you kill me some dark night, and inherit 'em? You hate me enough, and you know it."

With that parting shot, he turned, and stalked out into the gathering dusk.

By the time he reached the ancestral farm-house, night had completely fallen. As Whidden walked up the front path, the door opened, and he saw two figures silhouetted against the lighted hall inside: one, tall erect and broad-shouldered; the other stooped and bent and old, twisting a cap miserably in its gnarled hands. Whidden slipped quickly behind a bush to one side of the path.

"Won't you give me till autumn, Squire Whidden?" whined a broken voice. "My crops are good this summer; I can pay up all arrears when they're harvested."

"Even that won't do," snapped a

voice surprisingly like Alan's own. "Your mortgage has an acceleration clause; the whole thousand is now due. I offer you a hundred dollars for your equity—that's final."

The pitiful cringing figure drew itself suddenly erect.

"Foreclose and be damned to you, Squire Whidden. You'll get no help from me." He slammed his twisted cap onto his head and wavered down the path in as near a stride as his tired old feet could master.

As the door of the house was about to close Alan Whidden stepped from behind the concealing bush. His jaw was set, his mouth a grim slit, his eyes narrowed. Whatever qualms he may have had, at the deed he was about to commit, were now vanished.

"Squire Whidden," he shouted, as he hurried up the path, "wait for me."

The other peered out into the darkness.

"Who is it?" he asked. "I don't seem to recognize your voice."

"You ought to, for it is your own."

THE man from the future pushed into the lighted hall-way, and closed the door behind him.

Squire Whidden's jaw dropped, and his eyes widened, as he saw his exact double, clad in overalls, confronting him. What each man saw was wavy black hair, cold grey eyes, regular features, firm jaw, broad shoulders, and athletic build. Even Alan widened his eyes slightly at the uncanny resemblance.

"But—but who are you?" the Squire stammered.

"I am your own grandson, not that you'll believe it. I've come to kill you, in revenge for your cruel desertion of my father, your son, when he was a mere baby. And thereby I'm going to prevent myself from ever being born."

"Why, you're crazy. Crazy as a loon! I'm not married yet. I have no son."

"Crazy, am I?" He whipped out the seven-shot automatic. "Back up into your study, and we'll talk about it."

Alan Whidden read the look in the Squire's eye. It said as plain as speech: "I must humor this lunatic, and watch for an opening."

Alan grinned, and shrugged his broad shoulders, as he forced the other back into the room that held his files and papers.

Suddenly Alan realized how selfish was this entire performance. When he had killed his namesake, the latter's cousin Nate would step into his shoes, and doubtless would be just as heartless a mortgage-holder as his predecessor. For mortgage foreclosures were the result of a system, rather than a symptom of individual greed.

"Sit down!" he barked.

His victim sat down.

"Take a piece of paper, and write as I dictate: 'I, Alan Whidden, Esquire, of Holderness, in the County of Grafton, and State of New Hampshire, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, but knowing the uncertainty of this life, do hereby make this my last will and testament.'"

THE Squire's pen faltered, his jaw dropped, and his eyes widened, as he glanced furtively around the little study. Suddenly his tenseness relaxed, and he even smiled.

"Go on," he encouraged.

Alan studied his victim intently, but this time he could not fathom his victim's mind. Shrugging his broad shoulders, and holding his automatic pistol alert, he continued his dictation of a will releasing and discharging all mortgages. The other Alan Whidden wrote down the words with irritating

calmness. Finally it was finished, and handed over.

Alan Whidden of 1940 skimmed it through, keeping the Squire just within range of his vision all the while. Then he reached for the pen, and scrawled at the bottom: "Witness, William Jones."

"There!" he said. "Now you can die happy, knowing that your last deed was a kind one." He raised the muzzle of his weapon.

"Just a minute." The Squire hurriedly held up one hand. "You are from some other state, aren't you? Wills are not legal in New Hampshire without *three* witnesses. Hadn't we better send out for two more persons? I'd hate to have my cousin Nate inherit all these mortgages." There was no concealing the look of triumph in his eyes.

Momentarily blocked, Alan suggested:

"How about a deed, then?"

"No good either, unless notarized. You're not a notary, are you?" Squire Whidden's hand suddenly came up from behind the desk, grasping an antiquated six-shooter, which somehow he had managed to grope for in one of the drawers during the conversation.

But Alan fired a split second ahead, and the Squire's shot went wide.

The heavy slug of the forty-five hurled its victim back in his seat, as though it had been the fist of a pugilist. A black hole appeared in his forehead, a look of baffled surprise on his face, and a trickle of dark blood at one corner of his drooping mouth. Then he slumped and slid face down over one arm of his desk-chair.

Alan Whidden pocketed his own gun, stepped briskly around the desk, and felt the man's pulse. No sign of life.

Well, that was that! The fact that the death-shot had been fired in self-defense took some of the curse off of

what otherwise would have been a mere callous selfish slaying—a slaying for the mere sake of curing the slayer's incurable malady by preventing himself from ever having been born.

As these thoughts flashed through Alan Whidden's brain, he suddenly stepped back a pace, and clapped one hand to his chin, as his mouth dropped open and his eyes widened with horror.

For the man who was to have been his grandfather lay dead, killed before the birth of Alan's father,—and yet Alan still lived! The atavicide had been in vain.

The penalty for murder was death—in 1889 death by hanging. And hanging would prove most uncomfortable for a man who could not die. Life imprisonment forever would be even worse.

PANIC stricken, Whidden fled for the door of the house. If he could reach his time-machine before being captured, he could travel back a few years and be safe, for certainly a crime committed in 1889 could not be punished in 1885, for instance!

But, as he was about to fling open the front door and flee out into the protecting darkness of the night, a thought stayed him. In view of the taunt which he had hurled at his victim's Cousin Nate in the store that evening, would not Nate be blamed for this? Alan Whidden would never let an innocent man take the rap for his own deed; he must stay and face the music.

As he stood thus irresolute with one hand on the knob of the door, he heard steps coming up the walk. Turning, he dashed into one of the darkened rooms at one side of the hall, and crouched behind a sofa, shivering.

The front door opened.

"Oh, Alan!" called a girlish voice, a voice with the silver sweetness of one

of the thrushes of these New Hampshire woods. Never had Alan Whidden heard such a siren voice. It sent thrills of pleasure into his innermost being.

He heard his own voice answer without volition:

"Who is it?"

"It's Joyce. Joyce Piper. Who else would it be?"

Whidden got up from behind the sofa and came out into the lighted hallway.

Framed in the front doorway stood a gloriously radiant girl of under twenty. Her flaunting reddish-brown hair was the first feature that caught Whidden's admiring gaze. Then her eyes, yellow-green and feral, set wide and at just the least little slant, beneath definitely slanted furry brows of the same tawny color as the hair. Lips, full and inviting. Complexion, pink and cream. And a gingham clad figure, virginally voluptuous. A sunbonnet hung down her back, from strings bowed beneath her piquant chin.

As his eyes swept up and down, taking-in every detail, her two slender hands fluttered up to her throat in a protective gesture, and a delicate flush began slowly to suffuse from the V-neck of her blouse.

"Why—Alan," she stammered, as long-lashed lids fell over her yellow-green eyes. "You never looked at me like that before. Please don't. You—you embarrass me."

Suddenly it flashed into his mind who this girl was, for he had seen that same tawny hair spread disarrayed upon a white pillow in this very house, last evening, or a year ahead of now, whichever way one chooses to reckon time. This was the girl whom his grandfather, now lying dead in an adjacent room, would have married, but for his death. She now thought Alan to be that grandfather. If she could not see through

his impersonation, others would not be likely to.

Here was the solution of all his difficulties. Instead of staying to face the music, he would stay and there would be no music to face.

"It's all right, dear," he said. "I don't think I ever quite saw you before. What brings you here this evening?"

JOYCE PIPER raised her lids, and her slant eyes narrowed.

"It's about poor old Tom Wiloughby. He is all broken up over the way you turned him down this evening. He came staggering tear-eyed to me, and begged me to intercede for him. You know, Alan, that I don't love you—that I'm marrying you just to save my father. But you promised to be good to me, to try to make me happy. I'd be much happier, Alan, if you'd be less hard on your debtors." She lifted appealing eyes, and stared into his rugged face.

Under his breath he muttered:

"The dirty skunk! I'm less and less sorry for what I did." Aloud he said, "If it would make you the least bit happier, dear, I'd forgive every mortgage that I own. Look at what I wrote just before you came in." He held out the will which he had extracted at pistol point.

She read it through several times, first solemnly, then wonderingly, then joyously. She lifted up starry eyes, welling with adoration.

"Alan, why—why did you do this?"

"For you, dear," he lied. "After Tom left, I got to thinking about you—somehow—not that it's hard to do at any time. And suddenly I realized what a skunk I was. I decided to devote the rest of my life to making you proud of me. And lest something interfere, I drew this will at once."

"Alan—Alan—" she gasped, "I be-

lieve I love you."

She held up her face, and he swept her into his arms.

Gently he released her.

"Better run along now, dear," he said. "Get hold of old Tom, before he worries any more. Let's see, haven't we a date for tomorrow?" This was merely a random shot, but he would have to grope his way for some time.

She dimpled.

"Well, I *had* wanted you to take me to the church social, but you said you were too busy."

"I was. But, if I work hard tonight, I can make it. I'll call for you at six."

Once more he held her close. Then she was gone.

Truly he did have work to do. Locking the front door, and pulling down all the shades, he shouldered the body of his ages-apart twin, carted it down into the cellar, and buried it in a deep hole. And into that hole he threw all his 1940 belongings, including his Colt automatic, his overalls, and his postdated money. He dressed himself in clothes of his victim.

Next he washed up what blood there was in the study. Then, taking a lantern, he set out through the night to the time-machine on the field south of Little Squam.

He cranked the engine, tied down the catch of the controller-handle, and hitched to the handle a long rope, leading out of the door of the ship. Then he gave a yank, and the ship faded from view, leaving him holding a severed bit of string. The last tie with 1940 was broken. Alan Whidden had become definitely a man of a bygone day.

AS HE trudged back through the woods to Holderness Bridge, he chuckled to himself:

"When the fuel-oil runs out, and the

time-machine stops, won't some aboriginal Indian be awfully surprised!"

He spent the rest of the night going systematically through all the papers and records and recent newspapers which he found in his predecessor's study. By morning he had a fairly good bird's-eye view of the life into which he had stepped. But also he had a growing conviction that he could never face the church social that night, and get away with it.

Among the neatly kept bundles of receipted bills was one bundle of bills from a "Dr. Cheney." Early next morning, Whidden set out for Dr. Cheney's house. As he had subconsciously expected, the doctor turned out to be the same jovial-faced man whom Whidden had seen at the birth of Whidden's father, but of course a year younger now.

To him Whidden confided a pretended case of amnesia.

"I had a great shock last evening. A strange man came in and threatened my life at the point of a pistol. Made me draw a will, freeing all my debtors."

"That *must* have upset you, Squire." Dr. Cheney interpolated.

"Don't sneer, Doc. It did, and you'll find I'm a changed man. Well, to make a long story short, I got the drop on him, and disarmed him. When he had left—"

"Why didn't you hold him for the police?"

"And make me the laughing stock of the whole County? No, no! Well, anyway, when he had left, I found that I couldn't remember anyone in this town except Joyce Piper. Of course, a few names stand out, such as my Cousin Nate, and Tom Willoughby, but they are all names. Even you, Doc, were just a name, until I saw you again."

The doctor chewed his thumb and

(Continued on page 217)



**Lefty O'Rourke couldn't punch his way out of a paper bag. But when that red ray shot down out of the sky, it did something to him; something gave him a perfect lulu of a punch**

# The Cosmic Punch of Lefty O'Rourke

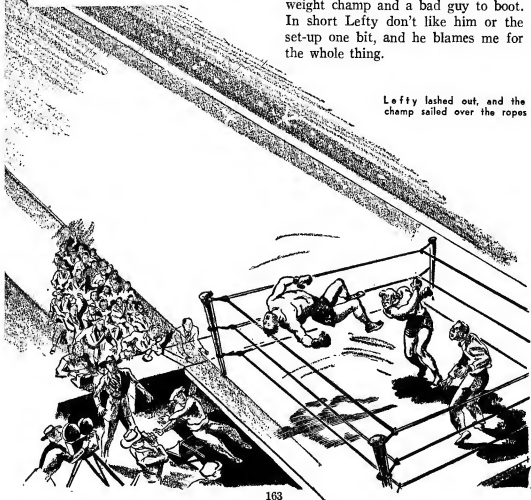
by P. F. COSTELLO

I'VE been Lefty O'Rourke's manager for the last ten years. The last five of them years we been barely making enough to buy beans and bacon, but still Lefty's got the idea that before he quits he's goin' to be middleweight champ. Of all cockeyed impossibilities!

He was a little hurt when I got him a job as sparring partner in Johnny Sylva's camp, but a guy has got to eat, and Lefty is just kidding himself when he won't admit that his days as a leather tosser are done with.

It wouldn't be so bad maybe, but Johnny Sylva is the present middleweight champ and a bad guy to boot. In short Lefty don't like him or the set-up one bit, and he blames me for the whole thing.

Lefty lashed out, and the champ sailed over the ropes



"You could've got me that prelim shot in Spokane," he muttered accusingly, as I tied the big twelve ounce sparring pillows onto his ham-like hands. "Being a sparring partner like this ain't dignified. It's like a piano player gettin' a job movin' pianos instead of playing 'em."

"Look, Lefty," I said patiently. "You've still got a few marbles left, and I'm trying to see that you keep 'em. At your age you can't afford to let these salty young punks use your head for a punching bag. You'll bust open at the seams if you do."

"I ain't old," Lefty mumbled belligerently. "Thirty two—"

"Thirty four," I corrected.

"Awright," he grumbled. "But thirty four ain't too old in the middle division. I still got my wind, and my legs are better than they ever were."

"They were never very good," I said brutally. "Seriously, Lefty, I'm thinkin' of you and Ellen now. That swell gal is dumb enough to want to marry you, and you ought to *thank* your lucky stars, instead of trying to collect a whole head full of them to carry with you all your life. You got enough saved to buy a gas station and live happily ever after, so why don't you forget the fight game? I only got you this sparring job cause you wouldn't've been happy if you weren't fighting someone. Now I'm tellin' you to quit, to get out while you're still in one piece."

"You've been listening to Ellen," Lefty accused moodily. "You'd think from the way you two talk that I was some slap-silly ham-and-egger. I'm still Lefty O'Rourke, whether you know it or not. My name means something in the fight game."

"Five years ago," I said, "you were a pretty good scrapper. Now, unless you get smart, you're goin' to wind up with a few pencils and a tin cup."

I slipped his head gear on and rammed the mouth protector between his teeth before he could reply. He spluttered something at me as he climbed through the ropes, but then he did a few squats to limber up his legs. That was one thing about Lefty. He took everything about the fight game with deadly seriousness.

IN A few minutes, the champ, Johnny Sylva, swaggered out of his cabin and trotted to the ring. There must've been five or six hundred spectators waitin' to see him go through his paces, and when he climbed through the ropes he got a nice hand.

He tossed off his bathrobe and strutted around the ring giving everyone a chance to admire his big chest and shoulders, then he went back to his corner, where his manager, Morry Kling, gave him his instructions.

"Use that right of yours," Morry said in a loud voice. "Just keep it cocked under your chin, and every time you get a chance let it go. Understand? Let it go!"

"I got'cha," Sylva said carelessly. "I'll put Grandpa O'Rourke away inside of two rounds. Just watch me."

I felt a slow burn around the region of my collar. I climbed up on the apron of the ring and pulled Lefty close to me.

"Don't be a chump, you chump," I hissed at him. "Box this guy now and don't let him kick you around with that right of his like he's planning to. You can't stand much of that, and you know it."

"Don't be crazy," Lefty said cockily. "I can take anything he can send."

That's the trouble with Lefty. When he smells the resin of the ring, and gets his mitts into a pair of gloves he gets a world-beater complex. Right now, I knew he was thinking that he was in



the Garden, and that he and Sylva were meeting for the title. What can you do with a guy like that?

When Kling gave the signal the two boys moved into the center of the ring, touched gloves and went to work. Lefty had, at one time, been a pretty classy boxer, and for a few rounds he could still keep out of trouble.

He circled around Sylva shooting his long left into his face and keeping the champ off balance. It is impossible to throw a right unless you're solidly set on both pins, and for that reason Sylva's attempts to connect with haymakers were more than futile.

There were several laughs from the crowd as he swung wildly and Lefty slipped away, spearing him with fast lefts. Sylva didn't like this a bit. His heavy, dark face flushed a shade blacker, and his puffy lips hardened over his mouth protector.

He moved in more slowly now, crouching a bit, trying to drive Lefty into a corner where he could hammer him with heavy blows.

But Lefty was still feeling pretty good, and he skipped around the champ, stabbing his sharp left again and again into the champ's whiskers.

That was the way the round ended. The champ breathing hard and looking about as pleasant as a bear with a thorn in his foot, and Lefty still skipping about like a dancing master, well in control of things.

THE next round started the same way, only it was obvious from the ugly scowl on the champ's face that he meant business this time.

He went right to work on Lefty, crowding him with lefts and rights, trying to open up a path over which his dynamite right could travel.

I was a little surprised at the fight Lefty was putting up. He was at a

bad disadvantage because he had no punch to speak of, and his jaw was strictly glass. On top of that he was ten years older than the champ, and already the bounce was going out of his legs. He was finding it harder and harder to avoid the champ's gorilla-like rushes, and it was only a matter of time before he'd find himself stretched flatter than a rug.

The crowd at the camp sensed that the champ was out for a K.O. and they were beginning to yell for the kill. A crowd is a pretty savage thing, and when the blood-spilling starts they start acting like African aboriginals.

Lefty was in a corner now taking a lot of punishment in the body that would slow him up even more. The champ was snarling now, really beginning to enjoy himself. There was nothing he liked better than mauling sparring partners, who had to be careful not to hurt him.

It looked like the beginning of the end, but just then something occurred to delay things. It was about dusk, although there was still enough light to fight by, and the sky was white and clear. The sun was about ready to call it a day and pull the covers of night up under its chin, when suddenly the whole sky seemed to explode into a thousand rainbows.

Honest, I've never seen nothin' like it in my life. It was like a thousand colored beacons that started flashing through the sky all at once. The white sky was stained with every color you could imagine, and some you couldn't.

Everybody in the camp was watching Nature's exhibit, even the two fighters were staring up at the sky.

"Aurora borealis," I heard someone behind me say. "Wonderful, isn't it?"

The flashing, colored beams of lights were really something to see. They even looked as if some of them were

spearing right down to Earth, scattering and breaking all around us.

One big red shaft seemed to shoot right down into the ring, and that's what turned my attention back that way.

And when I saw what was about to happen in the ring I forgot all about the aurora whatchamacallit.

"Lefty!" I screamed. "Duck!"

**B**UT I was too late. Johnny Sylva's roundhouse right was already steaming for Lefty's chops. And Lefty was still looking up at the sky like a yokel on Forty-second street.

He didn't see the punch, and he probably didn't even feel it. It crashed into his jaw just the same instant the big red bolt of light from the sky splashed over him.

He fell like a pole-axed steer. The board floor of the ring shuddered and groaned under his limp weight. I scrambled into the ring and helped haul him to the corner. One of the champ's handlers tossed a dipperful of water into his face, and I shook his head back and forth until his cheeks shook like two mounds of jelly.

The champ, I noticed from the corner of my eye, was strutting around the ring as if he'd done something to be very proud of. The spectators were cheering and he was shaking hands with himself, very pleased, very cocky.

It took us another twenty seconds to get Lefty around, and when he came to, he blinked up at me in surprise.

"What happened?" he sputtered.

"You not only forgot to duck," I said bitterly. "You also forgot to look. The champ dusted you off while you was watching the fireworks in the sky."

Lefty looked at me blankly for a few seconds, then a frown settled over his face.

"He slugged me while I wasn't look-

ing," he said angrily. "I ought to stop his clock for that."

"Don't be a fool," I said. "He'll just send you on another trip to slumber land. You got another round to go with him, and for Pete's sake, keep away from him."

Kling came over to our corner then.

"If your boy can't finish out his stint," he said, "I'll have to dock him. I like to be fair, but I ain't made of money. I gotta think of myself, too."

"You always do," I said. "But it ain't up to me. If Lefty wants to go another round, okay."

"I'm ready to go," Lefty said grimly.

As he moved out to meet Sylva for the third round, I happened to glance up and I noticed that the big fireworks show that Nature had staged was all over. The sky was white and clear again.

Then I got my attention back on the scrap.

**I** COULD see from the way that Sylva was stalking Lefty that he was after another knockout. And Lefty, the big fool, instead of boxing him, was standing flatfooted like he was going to swing.

If Lefty had a punch left it would've been okay, but he couldn't break a pane of glass with either hand, and that made it just plain suicide.

Sylva moved in behind a nice left and let a booming right fly at Lefty's head. Lefty stepped back and let the punch fly past him. Sylva's momentum carried him off balance, exposing the whole left side of his jaw.

Lefty swung.

It was a right cross and its sheer perfection brought a lump to my throat. I've knocked around the fight game for twenty years and I've seen all the great leather tossers in action. I've seen Dempsey dump a man for a somer-

sault with a six-inch hook, and I've seen the Brown Bomber lift a man over the ropes with a lightning left, but I've never seen anything, anywhere, to equal that right cross that Lefty O'Rourke, the wash-up bum, poured into the champ, Johnny Sylva.

Like all great punches, it was smooth as oil and fast as lightning. And the funny thing was that Lefty didn't seem to have much to do with it. It was as if some powerful, invisible force got behind his fist and threw it out there with the force of a pile driver.

What it did to Johnny Sylva was a sin and a crime.

It lifted him right off the canvas and knocked him backward over the top strand of the ring ropes and dropped him with a splintering crash into the sixth row of seats.

Out as cold as a mackerel!

Everybody in the whole camp was going crazy, but Lefty was still standing flat-footed in the ring, looking at his right fist as if he'd never seen it before.

Morry Kling was yelling at the top of his voice, a half dozen handlers were carting the champ to a rub-down table, spectators were shouting themselves hoarse, reporters were racing for the camp phones and I couldn't believe it.

Lucky punches happen, but not punches like that one. I knew I had seen *the* perfect punch and I was ready to die happy.

Morry Kling came rushing over to me then, looking as if he was just about to explode out of his expensive, pin-striped suit.

"He killed him, he killed him!" he screamed in my ear. "He's a murderer, that's what he is, a murderer.

"Take it easy," I said, attempting to calm him.

I don't think he even heard me.

"Get him out of my camp," he raved.

"If he's here ten minutes from now, I'll call the cops. You too, Flynn. You were probably in on this. I'll bet Perosi's manager put you up to this, sent you and your ape over here to kill my boy. A pair of murderers, both of you."

The spectators who had crowded around us, were treated to another good punch then. I hauled off and busted Kling right on the nose. He fell back on the seat of his pants, grabbing his nose with both hands.

"Ow!" he screamed. "Now he's trying to kill *me*."

"Come on, Lefty," I said disgustedly. "Let's get out of here."

"Okay, Boss," he said obediently. "It was a nifty of a punch you threw then."

"Yours wasn't bad either," I said. I looked at Kling sitting on the ground moaning, and then I looked over and saw the handlers still working frantically over the recumbent figure of the champ.

And a funny thing. I felt swell.

THE next day Lefty and I presented ourselves at the Ace gym where "Bull" Perosi, the middleweight challenger, was training for his coming bout with Johnny Sylva.

It was my idea. I figured that Perosi's manager would be glad to hire the guy who had knocked out the champ. My angle was that Lefty might be able to show Perosi just how he'd done it, and then Perosi could use the same punch and technique.

The morning papers had been full of the story. All the writers had built it up big, and the odds on the champ were tumbling down. The smart money figured that if Lefty O'Rourke could knock out the champ, a tough young guy like "Bull" Perosi would have a snap of it.

So when I stepped up to Perosi's manager, a shifty-eyed little guy with a toothpick in his mouth, I was expecting a warm reception.

"I'm Flynn," I said, "and this is my boy, Lefty O'Rourke. I guess you read what we did to the champ yesterday."

"Yeah, I read about it," he said without moving the toothpick in his lips. "Whadda you want?"

"I just thought," I said, "that you might want to use Lefty here to work with your boy. Might be a good thing for your kid."

Perosi's manager took the toothpick out of his mouth and put his hands on his hips.

"Oh you did, did you?" he said very nastily. "Well lemme tell you this, Brother; I don't want any dummy around my kid who doesn't know enough not to throw wild punches in a sparring bout. Your boy is just crazy for a little publicity, and you too. After that dumb stunt he pulled yesterday with the champ I wouldn't want him within a hundred yards of my boy. He might butt him in the stomach just to get his name in the paper. Now that's final. Clear out of here, both of you. I don't want any cheap ham-and-egggers who're trying to build a rep on lucky punches around my camp. Go on now, clear out of here."

I counted ten to myself very slowly. Then I stuck both hands in my pockets and swore to myself I'd keep 'em there.

"Goodbye," I said carefully. "And I hope that when Sylva knocks your bum out of the ring, he knocks him into your lap and breaks both of your legs."

I turned and headed for the door, but before I'd covered three feet a big hand caught my shoulder and jerked me around. I found myself looking right into the mean black eyes of "Bull" Perosi.

THE Bull is a squarely built powerhouse, with wide sloping shoulders and no neck at all. His arms and fists are thick and hairy, and his flat battered face has only the vaguest resemblance to a human countenance.

"I hoid that," he rumbled, "and I didn't like it. Now get out of here and stay out!"

He grabbed me by the lapels of my coat and shoved me backward. I flew through the air as if I'd been shot out of a cannon and hit the wall with a dizzying smack and fell to my knees.

I shook my head to get rid of the bells and birdies, and when my eyes cleared I saw that Lefty was walking toward the Bull, very slowly, but very determinedly.

"You wouldn't try that on anybody your size, would you?" Lefty said grimly.

The Bull looked Lefty up and down, then he laughed sneeringly.

"Listen you bum," he said nastily. "Pick up that cheap manager of yours and get movin' or I'll hit you so hard you'll be eatin' out of the back of your head."

"You and who else?" Lefty snarled.

I tried to yell to the big baboon, but it was too late. The Bull was already starting for him. His first swing, a murderous right, missed Lefty by the length of a whisker. Then he charged into Lefty, throwing rights and lefts furiously, driving him back by sheer bull strength.

I knew that Lefty was going to take a terrific shellacking, and it was all my fault. If I'd kept my big mouth shut this wouldn't have happened.

I scrambled to my feet, still dizzy, and started for the two fighters. I don't know just what I had in mind, but I was determined to stop this slaughter.

I grabbed Perosi's manager by the

arm.

"Call your boy off," I pleaded. "He's liable to kill Lefty."

Perosi's manager shook my hand off his arm, and kept his eyes riveted avidly on the fight.

"That's fine," he snapped. "He's got it coming to him, and he's sure goin' to get it."

By now a half dozen rubbers and handlers had flocked around, forming a ragged ring about the Bull and Lefty. They were all cheering for the Bull to flatten Lefty.

The Bull grinned wickedly and bored in, pumping hard blows into Lefty's body. Then he set himself and tossed a vicious right at his chops, but he missed by a full inch and left himself open.

And Lefty did it again.

He threw a right cross that traveled so fast that I hardly saw it. It was a smoking, sizzling punch that landed with the force of a baseball bat across the flat nose of Bull Perosi.

And the Bull went down and out without so much as the twitch of a muscle to show that he was still alive.

**HIS** manager screamed frantically in my ear and, a second later the Bull's handlers charged for Lefty, and from their swinging fists it wasn't hard to imagine what they intended doing.

The next minute the gym was a bedlam of flying fists and shouting voices, and, in the middle of the noise and confusion stood Lefty, cocking and firing his right cross at the jaws of the Bull's handlers.

And every time that punch landed a man went flying backward from the battle to land on his back, out cold. I watched fascinated.

Lefty had never had a punch, even in his best days. But now with six rights he had laid away Bull Perosi and

five of his handlers for the count and then some. The men who went down were not getting back up and the Bull was still colder than yesterday's gravy.

In about two minutes it was all over. The last man went down and Lefty was left all alone, glowering savagely over the carnage he had created. Still, in his eyes, there was a peculiar look, a look of mingled surprise and doubt and disbelief.

I heard a plop at my feet and I looked down to see Perosi's manager flat on the floor. The shock had been too much for him.

"C'mon," I said weakly to Lefty, "let's get out of here."

Lefty wiped the sweat from his eyes and grinned suddenly.

"Boy oh boy," he chortled. "who says I'm washed up? Did you see those rights. I never threw punches like them in my best days."

"Yeah," I said. "That's what worrying me."

**IF YOU'VE** read the sports pages lately you know what happened after Lefty knocked out Bull Perosi. The Bull was so badly battered that his manager cancelled the championship fight with Johnny Sylva. Then the papers picked up the story of how Lefty had knocked out both the champ and the Bull, and they began shouting that Lefty be given a legitimate chance at the champ. They pointed out that since the Bull was cancelling the match it would only be fair to give Lefty his chance at the crown.

There was a lot of sentiment in the set-up and the fans went for it like a ton of bricks. The idea of the old washed-up Lefty O'Rourke coming back with a great new punch kind of caught their imagination. At first Morris Kling flatly refused to have anything to do with the deal, but then the

pressure was put on him by the papers, and finally he agreed to have Sylva fight Lefty.

The two most surprised guys in the whole surprised town of New York was Lefty and me. But probably the maddest person in the whole town was Lefty's girl, Ellen.

When she read about the deal she came storming into the gym where Lefty was training, and read the riot act to both of us.

Ellen is small and dark and pretty, but is also as Irish as a shamrock, and that made her pretty hard to handle.

"I'm ashamed of you Micky Flynn," she blazed at me. "You should have better sense, even if Lefty hasn't."

"Now darling," Lefty said miserably, "you—"

"Don't 'darling' me," Ellen flared. "You know very well that you're taking a chance on losing what brains you've got by meeting Johnny Sylva. You promised me you were getting out of the fight game, and now you've signed up to meet the hardest, toughest man in the middle division."

"Lefty's a new man these days," I tried to explain. "He ain't the old Lefty. He's got a punch now. He's liable to murder Sylva."

"Lefty couldn't punch his way out of a paper bag," Ellen said disgustedly.

"Show her, Lefty," I said. "Go on and show her."

Lefty turned to the punching bag which was hanging next to his head and threw a right at it. It was the new right, the steaming blazing right hand that Lefty had somehow developed at the ripe old age of thirty-four. The punching bag exploded with a loud *pop!* under the rifle-like speed of Lefty's wonderful right.

Even Ellen was impressed.

She looked at the limply swinging bag and then to Lefty.

"When did this happen?" she asked. "I thought those newspaper yarns were just ballyhoo."

Suddenly I remembered something that I'd been wanting to find out about ever since Lefty had knocked out Johnny Sylva.

"LOOK, Ellen," I said. "You're a smart kid. I mean you've been to school and everything, so answer me this. What is this aurora—aurora boric acid, or something like that? What is it?"

"The aurora borealis?" Ellen said, lifting her eyebrows, "Is that what you mean?"

"Yeah," I said, "that's it. Now what is it?"

"Well," Ellen said, "I don't know whether scientists have agreed on just what causes it, but most of them believe that it is the result of cosmic rays flashing out of the universe to bombard Earth with light. The rays are of terrific force and power put why and what causes them is beyond me. But when did you get so interested in the aurora borealis?"

"Oh," I said hastily, "I've always been interested in it. Now Ellen, Lefty's got to take a shower so you'll have to excuse us for a few minutes."

I grabbed Lefty by the arm then and hauled him off to the shower room. I tell you I hadn't been so excited in years. The old ticker was thumping like a beaver's tail and my fingers were trembling.

"What's up?" Lefty asked. "You know I ain't supposed to take my shower yet."

"I know, I know," I snapped. "But I had to talk to you. You heard what she said didn't you?"

"About me not fighting Sylva?" he asked dumbly.

"No," I snapped. "I mean about the

aurora thingamajig. You know just at the time that Johnny Sylva konked you, one of them cosmic rays she was talking about hit you dead center."

"Did it now?" Lefty asked, impressed.

"Sure it did," I said. "It was a big red bolt and I seen it heading for the ring and smack right into you. You'da felt it only, at the same time Sylva's punch exploded on your button."

Lefty thought a long time, his heavy brow wrinkling with the effort. Finally he said:

"Okay, I got hit with a cosmic ray. So what?"

"You chump," I said. "Don't you get it? That's where your punch came from. You never had no punch till you got hit with ray. You know that, don't you?"

Lefty nodded thoughtfully.

"Yeah," he said, "that's right."

"Didn't you hear Ellen say that these cosmic rays are terrifically powerful?" I asked him.

"Yeah," he said, "she did say that."

He looked at his right fist wonderingly.

"That's the whole thing in a nutshell," I cried. "You got hit with a cosmic ray and now you got a cosmic punch.\* A killer-diller wallop. It's as simple as anything."

Lefty smiled happily.

"Yeah," he said brightly. "It's simple as anything. Now I got a cosmic punch. No wonder I've been knocking these bums silly. Oh boy,

wait'll I get another chance at Sylva. I'll murder the bum."

**L** EFTY'S new cosmic punch really set the sports world on fire. Every day hundreds of people crowded into the gym where we were training, to watch him dump sparring partners on their ears. He still had no left to speak of, and his legs were like putty after a few rounds, but I was figuring on him dusting off the champ in a hurry.

With his cosmic punch I knew he could do it. He felt the same way. Now that he knew that his right mitt was just chock-full of cosmic power, he was the most confident guy in the world. He predicted he'd knock Sylva out in the first round, and I believed him.

Ellen was still dubious about the fight and she told me that if I let Lefty get pounded to pieces she'd never speak to either of us again. And, believe me, she meant just that. Lefty had to win, and win with a fast knockout or everything was off.

That was the way things stood when Lefty and me followed the guard of cops down the aisle of the Garden a few nights later. The place was jammed to the roof, and everybody there was hollering louder than the guy next to him. It was a smoke filled, noisy arena of maniacs, but I loved 'em all.

When the champ came in he got a nice hand from the crowd, but nothing like they gave Lefty. They were pulling for Lefty to do the impossible. To come back at thirty four to take the crown he couldn't get ten years before.

\* Cosmic Punch. While Lefty and Micky Flynn have arrived at their conclusion in a very naive fashion, it is possible that their reasoning has a sound basis of scientific fact behind it. The aurora borealis is one of Nature's most perplexing mysteries. Opinions regarding it vary greatly, but it is definitely agreed that the brilliant rays of light which accompany this beautiful phenomenon originate from outer space, from some remote area of the great dark depths of the universe. Cosmic storms in space might produce

such disturbances, and if this is true, it is not terribly far-fetched to suppose that these powerful emanations from space might be absorbed by a human body on Earth. As the body absorbs the sun's rays, so it might absorb the mighty cosmic space-rays. Something like this might have happened to Lefty O'Rourke. Something like this might also have happened to Lou Nova, but evidently a very good antidote for such "cosmic" punches are a couple of Brown Bombs, taken externally.—Ed.

And all the stories about his cosmic punch had stirred them up until they were bug-eyed and crazy for him to knock the champ right up into the rafters.

Then both fighters were in the center of the ring getting their instructions. Both of 'em looked in fine shape, especially Sylva.

His heavily muscled shoulders gleamed magnificently under the strong arc lights and he looked in perfect shape and tough as leather.

Lefty looked all right too, except for the paunchiness around his waist and the varicose veins that crawled around his legs like twiners around an oak.

I wasn't worrying about his legs though, and neither was he. It was that cosmic punch we were counting on. That blast of dynamite in his right hand that he got from the aurora boroxide.

When he came back from the ring and slipped his bathrobe off I started to tell him something, but he wasn't listening or looking at me.

Instead he was staring down into the second row, where a small, ragged little man, with mean, baleful eyes was glaring up at him.

"Izzy the Eye!" I heard Lefty gasp.

I looked again and sure enough it was. Izzy the Eye was a character who hung around Broadway and the rumor was that he had an evil eye. At most prize fights you could find him staring hard at one man, trying to jinx him with that bad eye of his. Of course he was always paid by the other fighter and his manager. I realized when I saw him down there that Morry Kling had paid him to put the hex on Lefty.

And Lefty was superstitious as only an Irishman can be.

"Don't pay him no mind," I said hurriedly. "You got that cosmic punch in that right mitt of yours, and don't for-

get it."

"I won't," Lefty said uneasily. "But I wish he'd quit staring at me. I feel like he's draining the strength right out of me."

"Forget about him," I said desperately.

Then the bell rang and the fight for the middleweight championship was on.

**S**YLVA came out fast carrying the fight to Lefty with a barrage of hard rights and lefts. Lefty backed away clumsily. He had a chance to use his right once, but he hesitated for an instant and the chance was gone. I began to feel the sweat running down my back.

Lefty wasn't fighting the way I'd told him to. He was trying so hard to get away from the champ that he was leaving himself wide open. Sylva missed a few times but he wouldn't keep that up. He was still a little worried about Lefty's cosmic punch and that made him cautious.

Lefty got through the round, but he didn't look a bit good when he settled on his stool for the minute rest.

"What's the matter?" I hissed. "Take a pot at him. You got all the punch you need to put him away. You got the whole aurora borealium in back of you. You can't miss."

"I'm worried, Mickey," he panted. "Izzy the Eye is draining my strength. It's no use. I'm through. I can't hit no more. My cosmic punch is gone."

"You're crazy," I stormed at him. "How do you know it's gone if you don't try?"

"I just know," he muttered.

And he was right.

In the second round the champ laid himself wide open on a wagon tongue left hook and Lefty popped him on the button with the cosmic punch. But it was just a weak imitation of the real thing.



It didn't have any steam at all. It traveled so slow I could count the stitches in Lefty's glove as it fanned through the air.

The champ shook the punch off, grinned and started to bore in. It was apparent that he wasn't worrying about Lefty's cosmic punch any longer. He backed Lefty around the ring and finally caught him in a corner. Lefty took a bad mauling before he could get away, and then he was panting hard and bleeding from two cuts over his eye.

He looked desperate out there and, if I hadn't known he'd kill me when he got hold of me, I'd of thrown in the towel.

When he wobbled back to his stool after the second, I knew he was through. And he knew it too.

"I'm done for," he gasped. "Izzy the Eye has drained all the cosmic rays out of me."

I could do nothing but nod glumly. It was the only thing I could think of that would account for Lefty's lack of steam.

WHEN the bell rang for the third, Lefty tottered back to the slaughter and I hated to see him go. But he wouldn't let me stop it.

Just about that time a dark-haired wildcat clawed at my shoulder and I turned to find Lefty's girl, Ellen, at my side.

"You brute" she cried angrily. "Why do you let him stay in there and take that beating?" This is all your fault. If you hadn't gotten him all excited about this stupid aurora borealis business he wouldn't be in there. He thought because of that he was invincible and now he's getting the sawdust knocked out of his head for it."

"Please," I said frantically. "I—" I stopped dead. Something Ellen had said suddenly leaped before my mind

in neon letters three feet high. "*He thought . . . he was invincible . . .*"

"Ellen," I shouted suddenly. "Do you want to help Lefty?"

"Yes, but—"

"No 'buts,'" I yelled. "Listen to me."

It took me twenty seconds to get the idea over to her, and then she said it was crazy, mad, senseless, stupid and a few other things.

"Don't argue with me," I shouted. "Do as you're told."

I didn't mean to shout at the kid, but it was a good thing I did, I guess, because it got results.

"All right," she said, "I'll do it."

"Not till you get the signal from me," I said. "Now get going."

She hurried away, running up the aisle like a startled deer.

I watched her for a second and then turned back to the fight. Lefty was still on his feet, but it was a miracle to me how he did it. For another two minutes he staggered around taking more and more punches and then the gong saved him.

When he collapsed on the stool, he was too far gone to talk and I didn't have anything to say then that would help him. My eyes were glued on the big platform up on the rafters that held the various spotlights and photographic equipment. For an anxious ten seconds I watched the platform railing and then, to my great relief, I saw a small feminine form appear and wave frantically to me.

I waved back, and I had to keep my teeth clamped shut or my heart would have jumped right out of my mouth. I was that excited.

Then suddenly from the spotlight platform a great light broke as a half-dozen of the long range beams began sweeping about the arena. They were of all colors, and since they had been used the week before in the annual fire

show, red predominated. I grabbed Lefty and shook him desperately. His eyes flickered groggily.

"Look," I yelled. "The aurora bronchitis is back again. The cosmic rays are beaming all over you again!"

Just then a big red beam of light swept over the ring bathing Lefty in its crimson glare.

"Holy smoke!" he cried, shaking his head.

The lights all disappeared then, and the bell for the fourth round sounded. Lefty was so impatient that I had to drag him back to shove the mouth protector into his face. Then I let him go out there to fight.

HE charged into the middle of the ring like a new man. Unfortunately the champ didn't realize this. For he tried another round house right which left him wide open for Lefty's right counter.

And how Lefty countered!

Later, the press gang at the ringside claimed that four of their typewriters was busted when the champ came over the ropes and landed on top of them. Of course reporters always exaggerate. As

a matter of fact only three machines was busted.

But three or four, it makes no difference. Lefty won the middleweight championship with as pretty a right to the chin as I've ever seen.

I only made one mistake after the fight. I told Lefty what Ellen and I had done with the spotlights. I told him that it wasn't the cosmic punch which had beaten the champ, but straight Lefty O'Rourke.

When Lefty realized that the cosmic punch was gone for good he decided to quit the ring without even defending his title.

I've never seen anyone happier than Ellen when he told her this.

She slipped into his arms and, take it from me, the cosmic punch might be gone, but Lefty has got a cosmic clinch to take its place.

And me? Well I'm looking for Izzy the Eye, and when I find him I'm going to get him under contract. Because those cosmic rays went somewhere and there's just a chance that Izzy might have absorbed them from Lefty. And if he did, well I'll have the new bantam-weight champ right in my pocket.

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Acts of Congress of August 24, 1912, and March 3, 1933, of Amazing Stories, published monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for October 1, 1941. State of Illinois, County of Cook, ss. Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared A. T. Pullen, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of Amazing Stories and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, W. B. Ziff, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.; Editor, B. G. Davis, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.; Managing Editor, R. A. Palmer, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.; Business Manager, A. T. Pullen, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill. 2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.) Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.; W. B. Ziff Co., 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.; W. B. Ziff, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.; A. Ziff, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.; B. G. Davis, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.; S. Davis, 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. 5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the twelve months preceding the date shown above is ..... (This information is required from daily publications only.) A. T. Pullen, Business Manager. (Signature of business manager.)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 3rd day of October, 1941.

[Seal.] M. Gnass, Notary Public. (My commission expires February 26, 1944.)

## « STRANGE, BUT TRUE »

THE ability of the Japanese to take up the ways, methods and mannerisms of his western brethren has long been legend. There have been countless instances in which his quick pick-up of the western how-to-make-a-dollar philosophy has turned Mr. Average Moto a neat bit of change.

But one of the most magnificently commercial ventures made by a Jap to date was revealed not so long ago when startled Nippon citizens found themselves possessing match boxes which bore the legend "Down With Japan." Tracing these boxes down, the Jap police found that a Nippon manufacturer had produced them in the very heart of Tokyo.

However, the manufacturer proved that he wasn't conspiring revolt against his country. He explained, red faced, that the matches hadn't been meant for Jap consumption at all. They were intended for Chinese delivery, where, the manufacturer figured logically enough, boxes bearing such a slogan would sell like hotcakes!

Police proved his story authentic, when their checks revealed that two shipments had gotten crossed, and that the one intended for China had

remained in Japan! Clever people, these Japanese!

THE old-time prospector who used a divining rod to discover gold deposits has for years been considered a little batty in the belfry by most scientists. Yet modern medicine men of science have conjured up a new trick that bids to outdo the old divining rod in its mysticism. These scientists have been burning vegetables as the latest wrinkle in exploring for that liquid gold, better known of as petroleum.

Several noted chemists have discovered that certain plants have a tendency to absorb particular basic chemical elements from the soil. If these elements are present in a specific underground formation at one oil field, and if analysis of plant ashes in another location also shows them, the inference is fair that the same geologic formation is buried under the spot where the plants grow.

In common everyday parlance, then, if plants over oil bearing ground are like the plants from the tested ground in chemical content, there should be oil on this spot—at least that's what the scientists hope.

## MEN of the BRONZE AGE

by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Turning and looking up, Dian saw the terror of the Pellucidarian skies—a giant thipdar circling above the gas bag . . . Forty feet in length, with bat-like wings spreading fully thirty feet, it was armed with long, sharp teeth and horrible talons. . . . If it attacked the gas bag and ripped it open, Dian would be plummeted into the water below! Helpless, David Innes' mate, Dian the Beautiful, drifted over the Land of the Awful Shadow. . . . What would be her fate? . . . Follow her through gripping, chilling adventures in "Men of the Stone Age," another great David Innes story by the inimitable EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS . . .



ONE OF TEN  
THRILLING  
TALES IN THE

BIG MARCH ISSUE

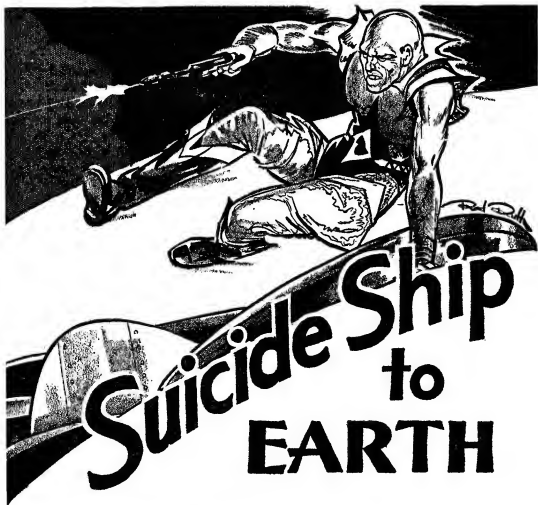
**AMAZING  
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The Martian's shot whipped past Wade's head



**The owners of the *Princess* had no intention of making port with her—but forgot to tell Tom Wade** by **DUNCAN FARNSWORTH**

STANDING there on the space wharf, First Rocketeer Tommy Wade clinked the two Martian *klekas* in his pocket against each other and gazed resignedly down at the miserable hulk which was to be his problem child for the next thirty days.

"Hell," Wade muttered, "I suppose I'm lucky even to have a berth like this."

She was named *S.S. Princess*, and

was as ancient and as generally decrepit an old tub as he had ever seen masquerading under the guise of a space freighter in all his ten years of void voyaging.

Wade sighed, tilting his frayed space officer's cap back on his thatch of straw colored hair. His face was youthful and rugged in spite of the gaunt hollows in his cheeks which were the result of very slim eating in the past few months.

Then he grinned, teeth white against the space bronze of his skin, starting down the duralloy planks that led to the slip where the *Princess* was moored.

There was an oiler, sunning himself against the rusty deck rail of the squalid space ship, and he looked sleepily disinterested as Wade approached.

"Hey there, Mister," Wade shouted. "Can you tell me where I'll find the master of this, uh, freighter?"

The oiler blinked his eyes for an instant, watching Wade traverse the gangplank to the worn deck. Then, spitting over the side, he jerked his right arm and thumb wordlessly over his shoulder.

Wade saw the dingy Master's cabin which the oiler had indicated. The door was slightly ajar. He took a deep breath and stepped over to it, rapping once on its rusty surface.

"Come in, come in!" a voice thundered.

Wade stepped across the threshold. He saw an undershirted, red-faced, white-haired old man sitting behind a paper-littered desk on which rested a bottle and two glasses. The red-faced old fellow weighed at least two hundred pounds, and Wade was certain that he couldn't be taller than five-six. His nose looked like a big puffed wart.

"You're Captain Toby?" Wade asked.

"And who else might I be?" The undershirted old man sighed and leaned back in his chair, his button eyes obviously sizing up his visitor.

"I'm Wade," Tommy declared. "Your new first rocketeer. Your owners told you to expect me, I hope."

The old captain sat forward. "And would you be having your papers along?" he asked.

Wade nodded, reaching into his frayed white tunic pocket and pulling

forth a sheaf. He handed them to the captain. Then, from another pocket, he pulled out a square card.

"And here's my ticket," Wade added. Captain Toby took it, and sat back again in his chair, eyes flickering over the papers. After a minute he looked up.

"Like as not they're all right," he rasped. "But I'll warn you now, Mister, we'll be expecting a miracle man as well as a first rocketeer. You'll need to be knowing your rockets to move this tub."

Wade thought for an instant of the two lonely *klekas* in his pocket, then said: "I'm just the First to keep them running."

Old Captain Toby smiled wryly.

"That's what I'm liking about youth," he sighed, "plenty of optimism." His button eyes regarded Wade for an instant. "I was optimistic once. But, of course, I was as young as you are, then."

Wade grinned back.

"Shall I sign the ship's papers, now, sir?"

Captain Toby fished into a lower drawer of his dirty desk, finally bringing forth a much worn ledger.

"All right, Mister Wade, you'll be signing at the top there, and the bargain's cinched."

For one last instant, Wade hesitated. Then he took the pen and bent over the ledger . . .

**I**T WAS LATE afternoon when Wade, grease stained and sweaty, reported to Captain Toby on the bridge of the tramp space freighter. Working only on side rocket power, they had managed to snort and bank their way erratically out into space shortly before noon. But that had only been with the help of some prodigious coaxing of the rocket motors during the better part of

the morning.

Captain Toby was busy with a pencil over a bridge chart, and he looked up as Wade spoke.

"Captain," Wade blurted, "I've done my damndest, sir, and I still can't get those blankety-blank portside rockets hitting straight."

"You wouldn't be losing some of that youthful enthusiasm, now would you?"

Captain Toby asked solemnly.

"But we're working only under star-board power," Wade protested, cringing. "If we're too long on those ancient tubes, this whole damned packet is going to blow up in our faces!"

Captain Toby pushed his visored cap back on his forehead and put his pudgy fists on the chart table. He looked up at Wade soberly. "Look now, lad," he said. "I know you've not the easiest task in the cosmos down there, but those 'damned' portside and stern rockets *have* to be hitting straight before we enter the Heaviseide Layer!"

Wade wiped the sweat from his forehead with a greasy right palm. He shook his head doubtfully.

"I can try," he said, "but I can't promise. For the life of me," his voice became suddenly strained from the tension he was under, "I can't see why they ever commissioned an old space scow like this in the first place. Why don't your owners give you repairs? God knows they're needed down there!"

Captain Toby put his hand on Wade's shoulder.

"And why have you signed on this packet, lad?"

Wade flushed, remembering the fact that he'd been down to his last *klekas*, and hadn't had even the offer of a berth for months until this chance presented itself.

But Captain Toby went on before he could speak.

"Exactly, lad, and that's about the

same reason for me being here. This is the first command I've had in two years. I couldn't be choosy about such things as necessary repairs. I've a wife, and two youngsters, needing food."

Wade nodded.

"I'll do my best, sir," he said shortly. He turned and started down the rusted duralloy bridge companionway.

WADE was down on the deck, and turning to enter the rocket rooms, when a glittering object, hoisted high on the rusty duralloy rail davits caught his eye. He stopped abruptly, staring.

"Well I'll be—" he muttered in amazement. His eyes suddenly narrowed. He stepped over to the rail, gazing up at the sleek, polished, gleaming sides of an exceptionally modern space lifeboat.

He pushed back his cap on his straw-colored mop of hair, shaking his head in perplexity. The super-sleek lifecraft was a tiny, streamlined, luxury space liner in itself. From the exhaust furrows on the belly of the craft, and from the very shape of the shining silver duralloy tubes that ran along the side of the ship, Wade knew that it was powered by atomic motors. Powered by atomic motors, when the *S.S. Princess* itself was so decrepit that it worked on the oldest type of rockets!

"This," Wade muttered bewilderedly, "is the most cockeyed note yet. Here our rocket tubes are ready to blow up at any moment, and every last seam on this stinking tub is likely to give from the very force of our forward motion—and then the owners of this barge have to toss all their cash around in fitting out this extra special, more than modern, space lifeboat!"

He shook his head again, still goggling in amazement at the craft. There was a cough behind him, and Wade wheeled. It was the same lackadaisical

oiler whom he'd seen as he first came aboard that morning.

The oiler touched his cap in what might have been intended as a salute.

"Nice craft, isn't she, sir?" he observed.

"Wade looked at the fellow, a huge, hulking, bald headed, flat-nosed man.

"She certainly is a trim job," he answered.

The oiler looked at him lazily, but Wade felt a certain appraising scrutiny in that glance. The flat-nosed fellow seemed to be reading his mind, for he said:

"She ain't ours, sir, if that's what you're thinking." He chuckled. "The owners of the *Princess* wouldn't spend their dough that wasteful like. 'We're just carrying this life baby for a shipment delivery.'"

Wade nodded.

"Then why isn't this packed away down in the hold?" he demanded.

The oiler grinned. His teeth were jagged and yellow.

"There ain't enough room down there, sir. Our other cargo takes up all the hold space. So they strung this life-craft atop deck. About the only place left to carry her."

Suddenly Wade's doubts vanished. That explained it. He grinned.

"Okay, I was wondering about it, that's all. Better get below. We'll be needing all you boys pretty soon. Have to get our stern and portside rocket tubes cleared by the time we hit Heavyside."

The oiler touched his cap again.

"Yessir," he answered. Wade watched him turn away, faintly conscious of the slight tinge of derision in his eyes. Then the big fellow had disappeared down the companionway leading to the rocket rooms, and for an instant, Wade took a last look at the trim, streamlined life spaceship.

And it was while Wade took that last fleeting appraisal of the ultra modern craft, that he heard the tapping on the forward bulkhead of it. The tapping that came from the inside!

Wade froze motionless, holding his breath as he listened unbelievably. No—it couldn't be—but it was, and he heard it once more!

*Rap, click, rap, click, rap, click, rap, click.*

The startled bewilderment left Wade's eyes, to be replaced by sudden grim suspicion. He stepped forward, tapping three times on the outside of the sleek hull.

*Rap, click, rap, click, rap, click, rap!*

"I'll damned well see what *this* is all about!" Wade muttered. And he stepped forward to the lowering electrowinch that would enable him to let the craft down on its davits to a point where he could put his resolve into action. . . .

KERMIT KEITH, senior partner of the space ship cargo company of Keith, Barlowe and Mackay, sat behind a cheap glasscade desk in the main offices of said firm—located on Mars—picking his dirty teeth with the corner of an envelope.

Kermit Keith was a small scrawny fellow, with dark black hair that belied the yellow wrinkles in his neck and the crows feet beneath his beady little eyes. His hair looked as if it might have been plastered or painted atop his round skull. The tunic he wore was tailored of expensive material but lost much of its richness because of the fact that it clung to his body like a loose sheet.

At this particular moment Kermit Keith was waiting. And in the next instant the person for whom he waited stepped in through the door of his dingy office.



Kermit Keith stopped picking his teeth and looked up.

"Hello, John," he smiled. "Word come in?"

The intruder, John Barlowe, second partner in the firm, was fat red-faced and white-haired. He had a long, slim nose, and angelic blue eyes. If it weren't for the fact that he wore especially expensive tunic cloth—and much more jauntily than Keith—and carried a shining cane of Venusian snakewood, he might have looked like one of the jolly hermit monks of Saturn.

"I just got a telaboard flash," Barlowe announced in deep rich tones that sharply contrasted with his partner's squeaky speech. "The *Princess* left on schedule this morning. Everything's fine. Just dandy. We'll be plenty rich inside of another month, Kermit m'boy. Plenty rich!"

"And the insurance papers; you checked through those very carefully, John?" Keith squeaked.

"With a fine toothed comb, m'boy. There's no way the company can wriggle out of the terms we made with them. A very clever bit of wording took care of that." Barlowe beamed. He rubbed his red hands.

"Smart deal, signing on that poverty stricken young first rocketeer," Keith falsettoed in compliment. "He seems to have been able to stir the hulk of the *Princess* into motion. Couldn't collect our insurance, you know, if we weren't able to get her out into space."

Barlowe chortled.

"We ought to give him a commission on the deal."

Keith smirked, then squeaked.

"I don't think he'll be back to collect it. Or the drunken old ass, Captain Toby, for that matter." He giggled. "It was a riot. He's been grounded here on Mars for damned near two years. No berths open for a

guzzler as old as he is. He just about snapped my hand off when I offered him the command of the *S.S. Princess*. Didn't even ask what his pay for the run was to be. He figures he'll be able to get back to his wife and brats on Earth, and maybe get a permanent assignment with our line if he brings the *Princess* through on the schedule we gave him."

Barlowe smiled, and pulled a thick Venusian cigar from the breast pocket of his expensive tunic. He lighted it reflectively, then added:

"Most of the rest of the crew acted the same way. They were all wharf rats pathetically eager to get any kind of berths on any kind of space-going rat traps."

KENNETH KEITH permitted himself a last giggle at this, then became silkily serious.

"What about Mackay, John? He's all set to sign over, isn't he?"

Barlowe nodded. "Glad to get out of the firm. He'll sign over for practically nothing. And in so doing, the ass will lose himself a fortune."

"He's rich anyway," Keith squeaked. "If it weren't for his childish desire to play spacefaring financier, he'd never have put a *kleka* in with us. As it was, he didn't bother us any, thank God, and only showed up when we needed more capital."

Barlowe nodded.

"He had his radium interests to keep him plenty busy," he acknowledged.

"They're still big enough to keep him from indulging in his frustrated desire to sit at a desk and order space ships around the void like a master navigator."

"Thank heavens," Keith observed. "Otherwise he'd have caught on to our profit and loss system long ago."

Barlowe chuckled again, his angelic blue eyes twinkling.

"That old profit and loss system, Kermit m'boy, will be planetary peanuts compared to this deal we've got now."

"Have Stover, Quanes, and Janess got their orders straight?" Keith changed tack abruptly. "Do they know what to do, and when to do it?"

Barlowe looked hurt.

"Why, Kermit, I personally gave them each their instructions. Stover is to see to it that the young first rocketeer doesn't embarrass the plans by turning genius and nursing the *Princess* through the entire voyage."

Keith frowned, as if trying to remember.

"Stover was the huge, hulking, flat-nosed pug ugly you signed on as oiler?"

Barlowe nodded.

"The one with the sleepy eyes. He's a good man for what we'll need." Barlowe took a satisfied puff from his Venusian cigar and continued, "Quanes is signed on as quartermaster. He'll make damned certain that no one does any probing around below the hold to see what cargo's being carried. And when the time comes, he'll touch off that cargo in a blast that'll send every asteroid south of Saturn skirting every which way."

"And what about Janess?" Keith demanded.

"He's signed on as second officer. That's just as a final precaution. Old Captain Toby might get too conscientious about wanting to bring the *Princess* all the way to Earth. It'll be while Janess is on the bridge and in command that our fireworks start. Besides, he's an expert navigator, and he'll be the one to pilot the new lifecraft when the three of them abandon the ship," Barlowe explained with the smug satisfaction of an executive who has taken

care of every last minor detail.

"Splendid," Keith's falsetto squeaked admiringly, "we're all set then. There's nothing that can block our plan—"

BARLOWE, by a fit of extraordinarily loud coughing, cut off his scrawny partner's sentence completely. And as he coughed he jabbed a warning finger in the direction of the door. Then, loudly, he said:

"Say, Kermit, was there someone knocking? Why, I'll bet it's Mackay. He's arrived ahead of time!" As he spoke he moved to the door and opened it swiftly to reveal a short, stocky, gray-moustached, jauntily-tailored gentleman, just in the process of raising his hand to the door to knock.

Barlowe seized the stocky newcomer by the hand, booming a hearty greeting as he did so.

"Well, well, Mackay. Glad to see you, old man. Glad to see you!"

The short, stocky, gray-moustached newcomer—who was, in line, the third partner in the space cargo firm—gave Barlowe a sharp glance, and after a minute took his hand from the other's hearty grasp.

Kermit Keith was on his feet, beaming.

"Well, well, Peter Mackay. It's a pleasure to see you, Peter. We were afraid that you wouldn't have time to get down here from your radium interests to—"

Peter Mackay cut him off briskly.

"Really wouldn't have had time ordinarily. But that madcap daughter of mine is off on another one of her vanishing acts, and her wanderings led to somewhere in this vicinity. So I thought I'd kill two birds with one stone. I can take care of you gentlemen, then I can find Joy and bring her back home by the scruff of her beautiful young neck."

Barlowe laughed mechanically.

"Well, that's a relief, Peter. I was sure from the look on your face that you were worried about something. And for an awful minute I thought you might have reconsidered our offer, or at least have been dubious about it."

Peter Mackay looked up sharply.

"Why should I reconsider it? It seems fair enough, and I've had my lawyers look at the papers. They've been wanting me to give up this enterprise for some time anyway."

Kermit Keith joined Barlowe in jovial laughter. Laughter intended to indicate to Peter Mackay that they were only kidding about even the remote possibility of his not accepting their offer.

"Have you got the papers?" Peter Mackay demanded. "I'm in a great hurry, you know."

Kermit Keith reached down into a desk drawer, and with lightning speed whipped a sheaf of forms out onto the desk.

"Right here," he squeaked, "right here, Peter. We've got them all ready for you to sign."

Two minutes later, Peter Mackay looked up, and set his pen down on the desk.

"There you are, gentlemen. You've bought out my interest in the firm. Frankly, although there's never been a great deal of profit in it for me, it's been lots of fun. However," he sighed, "my other interests kept me from giving any of my time to this, so I suppose it's just as well."

"We've enjoyed the prestige of your name, and your friendship, Peter," Kermit Keith piped.

"You bet, old boy," boomed Barlowe, grabbing Mackay's hand and pumping it.

"Well, gentlemen, I must rush off. I've got to find that harebrained daughter of mine and take her back home.

You understand, I hope?" Peter Mackay said. He had moved to the door.

"Certainly, Peter," Barlowe agreed. "And we'll forward your draft to your lawyers in the morning. Goodbye!"

"Goodbye," squeaked Keith.

Peter Mackay nodded, and stepped out of the door. Barlowe and Keith watched him leave, then—with simultaneously ear splitting grins—they turned to each other and shook hands triumphantly. . . .

### III

OLD Captain Toby tumbled his fat bulk down the bridge ladder two rungs at a time. Then, breathlessly, but not pausing, he turned and moved up the deck to his cabin. Puffing heavily, he threw open the door and stepped inside the dingy room.

Tommy Wade stood there in the middle of the cabin, facing him. His lean young face was gravely troubled.

"You wanted me?" Captain Toby asked. "Your message said you wanted to see me in privacy, down here."

Wade nodded.

"Right, sir. We've a new problem on our hands."

"Not another rocket breakdown?" Captain Toby groaned.

Wade shook his head.

"No, not that. I've discovered a stowaway on board the *Princess*."

"What?" the old captain was properly astonished. "Where is he?" he spluttered. "Where did you find him?"

"It isn't a he," Wade said. "It's a her. And I found her hiding in the streamlined space lifeship we're carrying as deck cargo. She'd been hiding in there, and if I hadn't gotten her out in time, she'd probably have suffocated."

Captain Toby's astonishment gave

way to incredulity. "Where is she?" he began. "I'll—"

"Here I am, Captain," a cool, liquid, feminine voice broke in.

The old captain wheeled, his eyes going to the corner of the room where a red tuniced girl had been standing unnoticed during the preliminaries of their conversation. She was, Toby saw in a glance, a young and very pretty girl. Her hair was blond, and hung down to her shoulders like a halo. Her eyes were green and lively, and her smile—which she was now using with her utmost endeavor to charm—was as white as starshine.

"Well—" the old man choked. "Uhmph, hah, er—"

"I hope you'll let me explain, Captain," the girl pleaded smilingly.

"I was going to throw her in the brig, sir," Wade began, cheeks reddening. "But, well, you can't do that to a—"

"To a pretty young girl," Captain Toby finished for him. "No, you really can't, Mister."

"I meant 'to a woman'," Wade protested, the color in his cheeks climbing. "You can't throw a woman in the brig."

THE old captain had regained most of his composure, and was gazing at the girl in a fashion that was far from disapproving. He turned to Wade, then.

"I'll agree with you, Mister, this is a problem we're having on our hands here."

"I'll pay for my passage when we reach Earth," the girl broke in earnestly. "Don't take me back."

Captain Toby looked at her.

"There'll be no turning back now, Lassie. You can be sure of that. We've done wonders to push this space scow this far, without turning back. Yes, you'll have to come along with us. It wouldn't be right to throw you over

the side. Now, what would your name be?"

"She refused to tell me," Wade broke in angrily. "And to be frank about it, she fought like a tigress when I pulled her out of her hiding place."

The old captain's eyes twinkled.

"Is that right?" he asked the girl.

"He was nasty, and overbearing. I bit him on the finger," the girl flared. Her green eyes were flashing.

"If we're going to permit you to carry along as passenger," the old man said, "I think it only fair, now, that you give us your name and an explanation for your being here. Don't you agree, Miss?"

The girl hesitated. She glared at Wade for an instant.

"I'd never have told that roughneck," she said. "But you're a gentleman, Captain. If you give me your solemn promise not to telflash a word about me, either to Mars or Earth, I'll tell you everything."

"She might be a criminal," Wade broke in angrily. "There's no need for us to make such a promise." He was still thinking of the finger she had bitten in their scuffle.

"No," Captain Toby disagreed, "she's not the criminal type to my mind. I think we've naught to lose through such a promise."

Wade reddened further under the amused contemplation of the old captain. He lapsed into a surly silence.

The girl brightened.

"Thank you, Captain." She paused, then went on. "It's not a very long story. You see, I've been brought up in surroundings which have always irritated me. Dull, stodgy, stuffy surroundings. My father is a very wealthy man. He tried to give me everything, of course, but never realized that he was depriving me of real happiness by confining me to the narrow life I had to

live as a girl of a wealthy family."

"Well put, lassie," Captain Toby applauded. "You've common sense there."

The girl smiled charmingly, then went on. "All my life has been spent in a constant struggle with my father—who is a fine man, but misunderstanding about many things—to live the way I want to live. I wanted romance, glamor, adventure, excitement. But he was against it all. He had the idea that sending me all over the interplanetary chain on luxury line cruises, was giving me adventure, or excitement. I got quite fed up with it all. I was, ah, er—"

"Bored?" Wade spoke for the first time, and sarcastically.

The girl looked disdainful.

"Yes, bored. I was utterly bored. So I finally decided to set out on my own, stow away on a tramp space ship, see life and excitement and adventure as it really is."

The captain nodded solemnly.

"And that's your reason for being here, is it?"

The girl smiled.

"Yes, that's it exactly."

Old Captain Toby shook his head.

"I see. It sounds like an honest reason. Now, tell us your name, won't you?"

The girl hesitated for but an instant, then she said:

"Remember your promise?"

Captain Toby nodded.

"I do that. Go ahead, lassie, you're free to speak. I'll not telafash your father, nor anyone else, till we reach Earth."

"My name," the girl blurted suddenly, "is Joy Mackay."

Captain Toby's red cheeks went suddenly sallow.

"And what would be your father's name?" he demanded chokingly.

"Peter Mackay."

Toby turned to Wade.

"And that would be the Peter Mackay of the firm which owns the *Princess*—the firm of Keith, Barlowe, and Mackay!"

"And this, this, this is his daughter?"

Wade demanded flabbergasted.

Joy Mackay looked levelly at Wade and nodded, her smile acidly triumphant.

#### IV

SECOND OFFICER JANESE, of the *S.S. Princess*, shifted himself to a more comfortable position on his cabin bunk and filled his own glass and that of his visitor's from the bottle he held in his hand.

The visitor for whom second officer Janess was pouring such liberal portions of Venusian whisky, was a huge, hulking, bald-headed, flat-nosed oiler named Stover. Stover had sleepy eyes, but they were more than usually alert now as second officer Janess talked to him.

"The very fact that Wade was able to fix those portside and stern rockets and get this tub through Heaviside without trouble, is enough to show us that he'll need careful watching, Stover," second officer Janess was saying. Janess was a tall, gaunt, unsmiling fellow with a frogbelly complexion and lank, uncombed black hair.

"I'm on the ball," Stover assured him. "It'll be easy."

Second officer Janess downed his drink in a gulp.

"It had better be easy," he remarked, "and slick." He reached for the bottle to punctuate his remark by filling another hooker. "There's plenty of cash tied up in this deal, in case you might have forgotten. And there's a neat percentage in it for us if we carry off our

part."

Oiler Stover's sleepy eyes glimmered greedily.

"This old hulk is insured to the hilt, eh?"

"Better than that," Janess answered. "She is overinsured. The owners faked a cargo value of three hundred thousand *zennas*. So this tub is worth all that—from the insurance company."

Stover shook his head and whistled admiringly through his ragged front teeth.

"Wow—three hundred thousand!" Suddenly his eyes narrowed. "But how did they get around the insurance inspection of the cargo?"

"Changed cargoes after inspection," Janess grinned. "And a slick job of it, too."

"But the insurance company must have seen the rotten condition of this old tub," Stover protested. "How'd they ever pass it?"

"Trick wording in the clauses. Barlowe and Keith aren't dummies. They had their lawyers draw up special papers—stating that any accident due to the condition of the ship is noncollectable. It's just insured against natural perils."

"But that was cutting their own throats," Stover frowned. "What else?"

"That," explained Janess patiently, "was the only way they could get the insurance. But that extra clause—a lot of whereas and whereof stuff—invalidates the first clause. So in reality, the insurance monkeys are liable for the loss of the ship and the cargo in a blanket valuation, *even if* the cargo's lost due to the instability and unspace-worthiness of the *Princess*!"

"Whew," Stover whistled through his jagged front teeth again, "what a sucker insurance company!"

Second officer Janess shook his head.

"No," he disagreed. "It's not a dumb insurance outfit, it's the smart shysters Keith and Barlowe got to write up their end of the clause."

Stover reached over to the bottle and poured himself a drink. He smiled then.

"Okay, have it your way. Here's to the smart shysters, and to Barlowe and Keith!"

Second officer Janess raised his glass.

"And to tomorrow night, when we go into our part of the bargain."

As they clinked their glasses together, there was a knock on the cabin door.

"Come in," Janess shouted.

THE door opened, and a tall, smiling redheaded young man stepped into the room. He was sparse framed, and very thin. His long sharp nose predominated the rest of his features.

"You're late, Quanes," Janess said.

Quartermaster Quanes closed the door behind him, still smiling.

"Of course I am," he answered. "I was busy down in the hold, getting those electro caps attached to the last of our precious cargo."

"Well," Janess grunted. "As long as you weren't trying to look up that stowaway Mackay girl, okay. Stay away from her. She's Peter Mackay's daughter, don't forget. And even though her old man doesn't know she's aboard the *Princess*, the girl is in plenty close with old Captain Toby and young Wade, by now."

"I didn't know about the last," Quanes said. "Fast worker, this Wade. I understood that they weren't too fond of each other when he first found her hiding in the space lifeship."

"If I didn't know you better," Janess said warningly, "I'd say you sounded jealous. Stay away from the women, Quanes," he concluded "at least

on this job."

Quanes sat down beside Janess and poured himself a drink into the glass Stover had just drained.

"Don't worry. I was just thinking that she's a looker, and might make pleasant company for me when we leave this old tub to blow to hell and go to that asteroid hideout until things clear up."

"That's all we'd need," Stover said disgustedly. "What would we do after that, kill her?"

"She'll die with the rest of 'em, when we blow the works up tomorrow night," Quanes observed matter-of-factly. "What's the difference?"

"Forget those ideas!" second officer Janess snapped in sudden irritation. "We don't want any wenches cluttering this thing up. As it is, everything will be smooth. The *Princess* will blow from here to Saturn, and we'll be on our way to an asteroid hideout. Let it go at that, and stop thinking about who dies and why."

"Don't get nervous," Stover said to Janess.

"Who's nervous?"

"You are," Stover retorted. "Calm down. Everything's set."

"It better be," Janess muttered. "There's a lot riding on it, and if we mess it up, there'll be a mass murder charge against us."

Quanes broke in. He was still smiling. He fingered his long sharp nose. "Never mind the jitters. Do as Stover says. Calm down."

"See that you don't forget your instructions," second officer Janess flared irritably, "and leave the rest to me."

"I'm pat on mine," Quanes smiled. "I touch off the fuses on the electro caps a little after eight bells. We'll be safely off from the tub by then."

"And I smash the rocket gauges, plus a few tubes, promptly at eight bells,"

Stover put in.

"Don't forget the navigation apparatus, also," Janess snapped.

"No worry about that," Stover retorted. "Just do what you're supposed to do, and I'll do what I have to."

"I'll take over the bridge during that time, don't worry," Janess said. "Even if I have to kill the Old Man."

"See that you don't get yourself plugged," Quanes added. "You're the only bright boy who knows enough navigation to handle that streamlined space lifeship. We'd be in a hell of a mess if you botched your part."

"Let's stop this damned wrangling," Janess said suddenly, mouth taut. "We might as well drink to tomorrow night—at eight bells!"

Silently, the three raised their glasses . . .

## V

### FIRST ROCKETEER TOMMY

WADE stood proudly by the port-side tubes in the rocket room of the *S.S. Princess* the following evening. It was a little after seven bells. Sweat and oil and grime coated his handsome young features, but for the first time in months, there was a glint of pleased satisfaction in his eyes.

The tremendous task Wade had faced in turning the ancient rockets of this wretched hulk into workable machines had miraculously been accomplished. It had meant endless hours without sleep, constant, ceaseless toil—and the devil's own brand of ingenuity and genius. But he had done it, and at the rate his miraculous job of nursing was progressing, the *S.S. Princess* might yet stagger into Earth port on schedule.

All of which, considering that the *Princess* had once had little likelihood of ever reaching port at all, was nothing

short of incredible. And now, as Wade tinkered with a treacherous valve handle, he even whistled a little. For there was another reason for his exuberance—an additional one.

Joy Mackay, the blond, green-eyed stowaway—in spite of the fact that her father was a partner in the firm that permitted this wreck of a space tramp to take to the lanes—knew a little something about motors and rockets. And it had been through this knowledge that the first mutual dislike between Wade and the girl had flared into a technical argument, and then cooled off into a newborn respect for one another.

Any girl, Wade felt, who knew as much about rockets as Joy did couldn't be wrong. And any young first rocketeer who could perform miracles in his trade before a young lady who could understand those miracles, deserved the wholehearted respect of that young lady. At least if that young lady happened to be Joy Mackay.

And in four days the mutual dislike had blossomed into something that was dangerously approaching the fringes of romance.

At the moment, Wade had forgotten that he was half an hour overdue for his date on deck with Joy Mackay. There had been a slight rocket count discrepancy which Wade began to check, and this had lured him further and further into his work until at last he stood as he did now, an electra stinson in his hand, and an utterly absorbed glare in his eyes.

Now Wade tinkered on. Time moved irrevocably forward. And a lovely green-eyed blonde grew more and more angry as she stamped up and down the deck of the *Princess*.

The rocket rooms, with the exception of Wade, were deserted. So intent was Tommy Wade, that he wasn't conscious of eight bells striking throughout the

ship some minutes later. And neither was he conscious of the hulking figure that slid from behind a duralloy bulkhead, stepped up two feet in back of him, and brought a thick blunt object smashing down upon his skull.

And with the blow, Wade slid slowly to the floor, blood puddling around his head, now conscious of nothing whatever.

Oiler Stover looked down at Wade, kicked him once with a heavy space boot. Then he grunted in satisfaction, and stepped up to the rocket valve gauges. With the same thick, blunt object, Stover smashed in the valve gauges, knocked off a few piston arms protruding from the portside and stern tubes, and otherwise played hell with the life and guts of the *S.S. Princess*.

Standing back, breathing heavily, Oiler Stover surveyed his job smugly. The portside and stern rockets were already missing count. In another ten minutes they'd stop all together . . .

OLD CAPTAIN TOBY hadn't left his bridge at eight bells. So that necessitated the use of an atomic pistol—skillfully used, butt end, in the hands of second officer Janess—on the back of his round old skull. Captain Toby slumped deckward with a heavy sigh, just like a man going to sleep. Minutes later, Janess had successfully smashed all the navigating instruments of the *Princess* . . .

And also at eight bells, quartermaster Quanes inserted his keys into the lock of the cargo hold bulkheads, slipped inside the darkened quarters, and went to work setting the time mechanism on the fuses he'd inserted over the ends of many highly explosive sticks of *explotomic*. He carried a small round gadget in his hand. The small round gadget had a time device on it similar to the devices on the ends of the fuses



he'd fixed to the *explotomic* sticks.

Quartermaster Quanes had to smile as he fixed all the time devices to correspond to the interval set on the gadget in his hand. It would be simple. Toby and Wade would be out for at least another hour; the remainder of the crew, stupid Venusian louts, he'd gotten thoroughly drunk—and when he pressed the button on the gadget in his hand, he and Janess and Stover would be a half-hour distance from the *S.S. Princess* which would promptly blow up with a bang.

And Quanes had one more reason to smile. Janess had taken the precaution to lock the girl, Joy Mackay, in her stateroom. But he, Quanes, had unlocked the door before the girl had realized what had been done. Now she would probably be up on deck waiting for Wade's nightly stroll. But she'd get more than she bargained for. Quanes had every delightful intention in the world of carrying Joy Mackay off with them when they took to the space lifeship. What the hell, you could always get rid of her later. Two months hideout on that asteroid would be made much more pleasant by her company. . . .

**PROMPTLY** at ten minutes after eight bells had struck, second officer Janess, Oliver Stover, and quartermaster Quanes met at their appointed spot on the deck of the *S.S. Princess*. The appointed spot was beneath the davit-hung streamlined space lifeship.

"All set?" asked Janess. He was breathing hard.

Stover nodded.

"Just like I promised. I worked it smooth."

Quanes was looking sharply, impatiently, up and down the deck.

Janess lashed at him with a question.

"Well, Quanes? What about it?

Your part taken care of?"

Quanes seemed startled.

"Yeah, sure. It's all set, but—"

"But what?" Janess snapped out the words edgily.

"But Joy isn't on the deck here. She usually meets Wade here at this time."

Second officer Janess snarled angrily.

"Why you simpleton, I locked her in her stateroom. Don't you remember? She's okay, won't be able to break out in time. Come on. Let's get going!"

Quanes was slightly pale around the gills.

"I, uh," he faltered, "I, eh, er, let her out. I unlocked the door before she knew you'd locked her in. I figured she'd be up here, at this spot, waiting for Wade. Then I could have—"

"Could have taken her along?" Janess almost screamed the words in his sudden blazing fury. "Why you blithering ass, you moronic nincompoop—I told you, I warned you, I—" he broke off spluttering.

Stover looked at Quanes with angry, heavy-lidded eyes.

"You damned sap," he grated. He whipped an atomic pistol from his holster. "We should burn your bowels out right here and now!"

Quanes turned ashen, now.

"Look," he pleaded, "don't. She can't do any harm wandering around. They'll never discover the *explotomic* sticks in the cargo, even if she does bring the captain or Wade around!" He spluttered on. "Don't burn me, please, for God's sakes. I thought it was a good idea!"

Janess grabbed Stover's arm, pushed it down.

"We'll decide on that later," he said. "Let him alone for now." He turned to the rail davits from which the space lifecraft was hung. "Let's lower this, and in a hurry!"

The winches creaked, and slowly the

beautiful streamlined craft was lowered to an even edge with the deck. Janess reached over and pulled back the seven foot hatch cowling along the top of the craft. It moved noiselessly.

"Pile in," Janess ordered. "Plenty of room in the rear. I'll take the controls. This little baby is a juiced-up power job, thank heavens!"

The three tumbled into the craft. Janess said over his shoulder to Stover,

"Get ready to cut those davits loose, the minute I choke up on these atomic motors!" He bent down to flash the vizaglow over the complicated instrument panel.

Moments passed.

"Hurry up!" Stover snapped.

"There isn't a lot of time," Quanes reminded.

Janess looked back over his shoulder. Sweat was trickling down his forehead. "I've been gunning the damned things for five minutes," he protested bewilderedly. "Something's haywire!"

Another three minutes passed. Stover was cursing softly in the back of the ship. Janess was soaked with sweat, and his tunic hung to him as if immersed in water. He looked back over his shoulder appealingly.

"Well?" Stover demanded.

"I'm no rocketeer," Janess protested. "I can't take 'em apart and put them together again!"

"Did you look this over this afternoon?" Stover snarled.

"Swear to Saturn!" Janess looked back again. His face was frightened, now. Desperately, he bent once more over the instrument panel. His hands worked frantically. More minutes flew by. At last he looked up and over his shoulder again. His voice was choked, almost on the verge of hysteria. "I can't do a thing. It's no use!"

Quanes was holding the time device gadget in his hand.

"I've set this thing," his voice trembled. "We're done for if we stick around here!"

"Get down there," Stover snarled suddenly, "and remove those caps on the fuses. It's the only way."

Stumblingly, shakily, frantically, Quanes climbed out of the space life-craft and jumped from the rail to the deck. He straightened up—and looked into the muzzle of an atomic rifle!

FIRST rocketeer Tommy Wade, still a trifle unsteady, and with a head quite a little bit bloody, was snarling very unpleasantly behind the stock of that rifle!

"Get the hell up with your hands, Quanes!" he snarled.

Quanes got the hell up with his hands.

Joy Mackay, who was standing beside Tommy Wade, green eyes blazing like twin fires from hell, was also holding an atomic rifle. She looked contemptuously at Quanes.

"Saboteur!" she spat.

Quanes paled, then, suddenly, he yowled.

"Janess, Stover, watch yourselves!"

Joy Mackay clouted Quanes on the side of the head with her rifle butt. He whimpered once as he sprawled face forward and unconscious to the deck.

Second officer Janess stuck his head out of the hatch of the space lifeship, blinking quizzically. Wade was there to bring the blunt end of his atomic rifle crashing down on the fellow's unprotected skull.

Oiler Stover came up and out of the space lifeship shooting. But his aim was wild, and just a preliminary to give him a chance to emerge. Wade, as Stover figured he would, wasted precious seconds in forcing the unwilling Joy Mackay back into the shelter of a bulkhead. Then Wade turned to face

Stover.

Stover fired as Wade wheeled. The shot tore into the fleshy part of Wade's thigh, but he forced a grin to keep the other from knowing he'd hit him. Then Wade fired, carefully and coolly, as two shots from Stover's atomic pistol burned the duralloy armor of the bulkhead behind his ear.

Stover staggered back. Wade's shot had caught him in the shoulder. Wade's second shot was better. Stover pitched over dead, an ugly blue burn—the size of a *kleka*—in the center of his forehead!

Joy Mackay stepped out from behind the bulkhead.

"Tommy," she sighed. "You'll have to teach me how to shoot that well."

Wade grinned. This was the type of wife to have. He suddenly decided to see what he could do about the having.

"I guess I did all right on the atomic motors in the life spaceship, eh darling?" Joy said proudly.

"Beyond repair?" Wade asked.

"Not for *you*," the girl answered.

Wade grinned again. "You're a clever little mechanic, Joy, and a very tough one."

Joy Mackay sighed.

"Oh, Lord. I always forget to be feminine at the proper moments. Why do I always forget to turn on my girlish wiles?" She smiled sweetly.

Wade looked at her.

"What do you think you're doing now?" he asked.

Quanes suddenly groaned at their feet. Wade looked down. The fellow had a small, glittering gadget in his hand. Wade bent over and picked it up. Suddenly he gasped, face ashen. Like a wild man, he turned and bolted away from Joy, over to the cargo hatches. In an instant, he pried one open and disappeared below the deck.

Below, Wade worked like a dervish.

He flew from case to case, tearing cap after cap from the explotomic sticks in them. Finally, as he went over the hold for the fourth time without finding any more, he sighed deeply. The menace of an immediate explosion was gone. Wade leaned against the case and mopped his face. He wished he was as cool as Joy more than likely was at the moment. And thinking of Joy once more, Wade remembered what he had resolved to do in the matter of a wife. He started back to the deck . . .

**B**UT when Wade faced Joy again on deck, the grin was gone from his face, and an entirely different expression was there: Maybe it was the last strain, the shock of the potential explosion, that suddenly jarred the punch drunk goofy glow from his brain. For it could only have been a punch drunk glow that would have allowed him to forget two disastrous items of grim reality in the after flush of his coup against Stover, Janess, and Quanes.

Quickly, and without trimmings, Wade explained their predicament to Joy.

"We'd been chumps enough to forget that we're now stranded helplessly out here in space," he said. "The instruments, the rockets, everything to enable us to find our way back to Mars or ahead to Earth has been thoroughly smashed. Undoubtedly we've already drifted off our course, and we'll drift farther and farther, through the timeless reaches of the void. We might very well never be found again!"

"But, Tommy," the girl protested, "there's the telaflash system."

"That's been smashed too. They thought of everything."

"Nice work, youngster!"

Tommy Wade wheeled at the new voice. Wheeled, and faced Captain Toby, white-faced, head wrapped in a

thick towel, and leaning against a bulkhead rail for support. Wade leaped to the old man's side.

"You all right, Captain?"

"Think I'll manage," Toby said a little thickly. "I'm still a little dizzy from that bang they maneuvered."

Wade helped him to a deck casing, where he sat down while Joy expertly unwrapped the towel from his battered head, and readjusted it for more comfort and cleanliness. Wade explained the situation from what he had seen of it.

"We could be in a rottener mess, lad," Captain Toby said when Wade had finished, "but to do so would be quite a trick." He shook his head dispondently. "I see it all too clearly, and much too late. The dirty devils as are our owners must have cooked this up. Just before I staggered down here, after coming to, I pawed through the ships' papers more thoroughly than a captain generally does. I paid especial note to the duplicate insurance papers, which I'd never bothered to give particular heed to till now."

"Well," Wade demanded. "What did you find?"

"This vessel is insured for three hundred thousand *zennas*!"

Wade gasped. Joy opened her mouth in disbelief.

"No," Wade protested, "that's impossible."

"It was a slick, dirty deal that I've no time to explain now," Captain Toby said. "But the facts are that the three murdering skunks who tried to ruin us—and have just about succeeded—are stooges of the owners, Keith, Barlowe, and Mackay, who wanted the *Princess* to blow up in space so they'd pick up a fortune from the insurance."

"I don't believe it!" It was Joy Mackay who stepped forward, cheeks crimson, green eyes blazing. "My

father would never be a party to such a deal. The money doesn't mean a thing to him, he's got more than he could ever use. There'd be no reason for him to risk his reputation by such an underhanded scheme!"

WADE put his hand on the girl's shoulder.

"Take it easy," he said. "We don't think your dad is involved in this, Joy. But it's a cinch one or both of his partners are."

Joy was still hotly indignant.

"I'll prove it," she stormed. "I'll get him right now on the telaflash and find out."

"Calm a bit, Joy," Captain Toby advised. "There's no telaflash left in commission. We believe you, lass!"

"But there *is* a telaflash," Joy insisted, "in the little space lifeship. I saw it when I was inside putting the atomic motors on the blink."

Tommy Wade let out a yell of wild joy.

"Then we're on our way!" he shouted. "If there's that telaflash, and I recall now there is, we're all set. About a hundred million super ideas have just occurred to me. All of them are wows, listen!" And he drew Joy aside, whispering fiercely in her ear.

"You have your dad arrange that, will you?" he asked her, "and if needs be, he can telaflash an answer."

Joy nodded excitedly, and turned to rush to the streamlined little space lifeship.

Captain Toby was thoroughly bewildered.

"What's this all about, lad? Have you lost your mind?"

"No, Captain," Wade shouted happily. "I've just found it again. I'm going to repair those atomic motors and get us back to Mars!"

"Can you do it?" Toby asked, hope

dawning in his eyes.

"You bet. And that little ship has the power to do something else. Something else that's going to put us on easy street!"

"Wade, Wade," Joy came running back a few minutes later, "the telaflash worked. I got father. I was right. He knew nothing of it. He'd been bought out by Barlowe and Keith only a few days ago. He's going to do what you say. He'll have everything set when we get back to Mars!"

Wade grinned, pulling off his tunic jacket and rolling up his sleeves. "Now to get to work on a motor," he grunted.

THE shipping offices of the space cargo firm of Keith and Barlowe were crowded some four days later. Crowded by the presence of an old grizzled space captain, a young first rocketeer, a stocky, moustached gentleman named Peter Mackay, and said gentleman's daughter Joy.

Mackay was speaking, and his words lashed at Barlowe and Keith, both of whom sat in chairs behind the cheap, large desk in the center of the room.

"So you're stuck," Peter Mackay asserted. "You're caught with the goods, both of you. Young Wade towed the *S.S. Princess* into port by means of the small space lifeship. And that towing, you two crooks, means salvage. Salvage according to the strict laws of space rulings. Young Wade is entitled to a salvage fee from you of exactly the *insured value* of the *S.S. Princess* — three hundred thousand!"

"But—" Keith squeaked strickenly.

"It's sheer banditry!" Barlowe boomed. "Why, why—"

"It's the law," Peter Mackay cut in.

"But paying three hundred thousand would break us—" Keith bleated. "We've hardly that much including our business!"

"Turn over every last rightful cent," said Peter Mackay in the squarejawed manner that had made him millions, "including the business. Otherwise we'll throw you to the jaws of the law. Take your choice. I had my lawyers draw up young Wade's claims. I've the papers here. Sign them or else I'll call enforcement officers!"

Barlowe bit into his underlip. His voice shook as he spoke to his partner.

"All right. They've got us. We might as well, Kermit."

Wade, Captain Toby, Joy, and Peter Mackay grinned in simultaneously satisfied triumph. Barlowe and Keith took the papers and signed.

Wade turned to Joy.

"Think you can marry me in spite of your father's millions?" he asked.

Joy grinned like an elf.

"You are now the prosperous owner of a second rate line which—I am positive—you will some day build into a super-super service. That should satisfy my greed, plus the cash you're getting from Barlowe and Keith."

Wade, with one arm around Joy's slim waist, turned to captain Toby.

"And you've got a berth on my line, Captain, from now on in."

It was the old captain's turn to grin.

Peter Mackay spoke up.

"I've only just met you, Wade. But that doesn't make any difference to Joy. I can never change her mind once it's made up. And this time it is. However, for once I agree with her."

Wade reddened beneath his space bronze in becoming modesty. Then he turned to Keith and Barlowe who looked sickly on.

"Get out of my office, both of you," he ordered, "while I kiss my future wife!"

They got, quickly. But as for Captain Toby and Peter Mackay, they looked on shamelessly—admiringly . . .



There was a scream, and Ben Glead sprang toward the girl

# The **FIEND** of New London

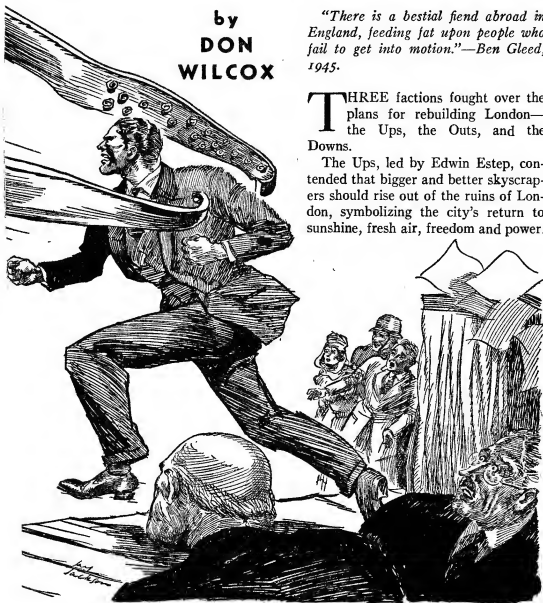
London was a shambles. It had to be rebuilt. But Ben Gleed wanted to make it a Super City of science.

by  
**DON  
WILCOX**

*"There is a bestial fiend abroad in England, feeding fat upon people who fail to get into motion."*—Ben Gleed, 1945.

**T**HREE factions fought over the plans for rebuilding London—the Ups, the Outs, and the Downs.

The Ups, led by Edwin Estep, contended that bigger and better skyscrapers should rise out of the ruins of London, symbolizing the city's return to sunshine, fresh air, freedom and power.



The Outs, whose cause was championed by the estimable John Kandenfield, a survivor from the now defunct House of Lords, argued that the modern city should spread wide over God's green acres (and the devil's burnt-black ones as well) and that every building worth constructing deserved a spacious landscape.

The spokesman for the Downs was Bronson Black, famous R.A.F. ace, whose realistic forecasts of future wars were convincing argument for a more deeply rooted, deeply sheltered urban setting—an underground city.

The three-way battle raged for several weeks over the committee's conference tables.

The bombastic little orator, Edwin Estep, paced and fumed round and round his miniature London of the Ups, with its tall graceful white towers and interlaced streets of many levels. But the Outs and the Downs used the model towers to hang their hats and umbrellas on.

The big hearty Mr. Kandenfield never tired of cajoling the committeemen into joining him in the front yard where they could sit in colored canvas chairs and enjoy gazing upon the wide-spread model of a London built outward across the green lawn. But when the Ups and Downs accepted Kandenfield's invitation, they usually fell asleep in their chairs, using the model buildings for footstools.

Bronson Black crowded the window ledges of the conference room with his glass aquarium models of underground industrial plants, office buildings, and apartment houses, and he bit his pipe savagely and muttered disconcerting predictions about the next crop of bombs. But the Ups and Outs adopted his glass models for ash trays, if not spittoons.

Came a hot week in August and the

conference room almost turned into a shambles.

Ups and Downs got together to snarl and hurl epithets and teacups at the Downs. Ups and Downs chased the Outs off the lawn. Downs and Outs grabbed the model skyscrapers of the Ups and used them as cudgels.

Funds ran low, the whole secretarial staff got fired, likewise the doorman and the office boy, all of whom were glad to go, for the conference room had become unbearable. Millions of impatient citizens flooded the committee with angry letters demanding action.

"Give us a New London!" "Hurry up with that plan!" "Build it *out*!" "Build it *up*!" "Build it *down*!" "Build it *any* way—but give us ACTION!"

Pressures multiplied. The committee funds ran dry. The Downs were down in the mouth, the Ups threatened to walk out, and the Outs blew up.

Then a boat arrived bearing America's famous Ben Glead, the manager of the world-renowned Super City.

"At last!" the planning committee gasped. "Now maybe we'll get somewhere."

THE handsome young Ben Glead marched down the gang plank and through the battalion of photographers crowding around to catch the best angles on his piercing eyes and square-cut jaw.

"So this is New London!" he said mirthlessly, looking off towards the expanse of city that was only partially cleared of its wartime ruins.

"It's going to be," said the brisk little Edwin Estep, shaking Ben's hand vigorously, "as soon as we start erecting skyscrapers."

"Not skyscrapers," said Kandenfield. "There's no need—"

"Right, Kandy," Bronson Black snapped. "The need is to build *under*



the ground, not *over* it."

"Not so fast, gentlemen," Ben Gleed smiled. "You invited me to come as a counsellor, but I didn't expect to be embroiled in an argument before I got my first breath."

"Don't breathe too deep," Edwin Estep laughed dryly. "London's been through a lot besides bloomin' roses the last few years. Eh, John? Eh, Bronson?"

But John Kandenfield had turned to greet three pretty girls just returned from America, and Bronson Black had been caught by the cameramen, alert to serving up pictures of R.A.F. heroes to their public. For the moment the brisk little political orator had Ben Gleed to himself.

"I'm glad you could come, Mr. Gleed," said Estep. "I've been trying to pattern New London along the lines of your famous Super City—streamlined efficiency—architectural beauty—power—grandeur. I had the pleasure of visiting your city once, and I'll never forget the hospitality shown to visitors who came there in search of new ideas."

"Thank you," said Ben Gleed. "We've invited all cities to copy our methods whenever it's to their advantage to do. And we've been well repaid for this policy, with one exception."

"Oil Center?" Estep asked. "I've read about it."

"It's the only city that has failed to meet our courtesy halfway. Oil Center considers itself a rival for our business. Really, there's more than enough business for all of us. But it was this threat of an intercitiy war that merely kept me in America."

"Everything ironed out, I hope?"

"Strangely, Oil Center has thrown out a few feelers toward renewing friendship during the last two weeks. So I told my Super City staff to con-

sider the hatchet buried, I left everything in the hands of the assistant manager, and boarded a ship for England. Naturally I'm proud to be consulted on the London plan."

"I'm sorry you had to come at your own expense," Bronson Black said, rejoining the group. "The committee has practically dissolved for lack of funds."

"Here's our car," said John Kandenfield. "Let's get off our feet."

BY THE time they reached the Warwick Hotel, headquarters for the planning committee, Ben Gleed had had his first look at the bombed city. Its present condition was not so deplorable as to render a newcomer hopeless over its prospects. It varied greatly from one section to another. Some quarters showed scarcely any signs of ruin, but the buildings sagged with age. Some blocks were as smooth and bare as tennis courts, others were piled high with broken stones or gashed with rubble-filled basements. Plentiful were the black ribs of fire-ravished buildings.

The work of clearing ground was going on everywhere, but there was little building. No use to build until the powers-that-be came forth with their plan.

But the sights that Ben Gleed found most striking were the traffic streams of new auto-houses and cars with trailers. Wide parkways and houseless blocks were filled with these small, bright mobile houses. It looked as though London was temporarily living on wheels.

"Where did they all come from?" Ben Gleed asked.

"America," said Edwin Estep, leading the way into the conference room.

"News to me," said Gleed. "Aren't they expensive?"

"The auto-houses come in three

standard patterns, and the mass production, together with flat packing for shipment, help cut the cost. As for the house trailers," Estep added, "we've been buying them from America since before the war."

"On credit," the R.A.F. hero amended. "Where your corporations find so much unlimited credit for us is a mystery to me. I'll be glad when we get back to business in a new underground city."

Ben Gleed felt the strong glare of the slow-blinking owl-eyed man at the desk labelled EXECUTIVE SECRETARY. Estep offered an introduction.

"I've read about your wonderful Super City," said Vernon Webb, removing his large spectacles and nodding with conspicuous dignity. His voice was satin-smooth.

"Mr. Webb came to us recently," Estep explained, "at the high recommendation of England's recent conclave of financiers. You'll find him ready to serve you during your stay, Mr. Gleed. Even your business and personal correspondence you may handle through him if you wish."

"Thank you," said Gleed. After further conversation the young city manager began to size up London's planning dilemma. The committee had thinned down to Estep, Kandenfield, and Black—three deadly enemies as to planning theories, who were forced by the clamoring pressures of the citizens to sit tight and face each other. They had no secrets from each other, and apparently none from Vernon Webb, who listened with owl-eyed interest to every word that was spoken.

"For my part, Gleed," said Estep, "we could dump this whole damned deadlock in your lap if we could only afford to pay you."

"Forget the pay. Americans don't mind lending a hand after all you've

been through over here," said Gleed. "The important thing is that the right choice be made. The plan that goes into concrete and steel can't be changed from season to season like a suit of clothes. It will stamp a pattern of living on Londoners for generations. You don't want it to be a backward pattern."

"What do you suggest, in view of the likelihood of wars to come?" the R.A.F. hero asked.

"If you don't mind, I'll browse among your blueprints and models a few days," said Gleed, "and listen in on your committee sessions and see how you're getting along."

"We aren't," sighed Kandenfield. "Anyone want a drink?"

THE minute that Ben Gleed and the three committeemen departed, Vernon Webb caught up a telephone, dictated a cablegram to a code name in the United States.

"Business is fine," the message went. "However B. G. has arrived. Cable instructions."

The reply was delivered to Webb at his auto-house the following evening.

"Let the O. C.—S. C. war be fought in England. Knife B. G."

In the days that followed, any observer who had taken the trouble to watch the owl eyes of Vernon Webb would have been struck by the close scrutiny exercised upon Ben Gleed. Every man, the executive secretary may have reasoned, leaves himself open to a backstab occasionally. Vernon Webb was waiting.

BEFORE the end of the week Ben Gleed knew that one big reason the New London Plan had bogged down was that the three committeemen weren't digging in. If there was anything the systematic Gleed resented it

was procrastination. But consider the records of Estep, Kandenfield and Black:

In three days the vigorous little Estep hopped back and forth over England to make no less than eight political speeches. Whenever he heard that some disgruntled aristocrat had let go a tirade against the new post-war democracy, Estep couldn't sit still. He was all sparks and dynamite and he had to explode.

How did Estep know about these bloomin' aristocrats that needed slapping down?

Through Vernon Webb, the efficient executive secretary, who thumbtacked newspaper clippings on his bulletin board.

John Kandenfield's days ran to idleness because of intemperate drink habits.

Why was Kandenfield drinking more these days?

Because the efficient executive secretary had quickly discovered the erstwhile lord's tastes in fine liquors and kept an abundant supply near his desk. Bronson Black was continually magnetized away from the conference room by the excitement of victory celebrations. His appearance at parades, memorial services, and cornerstone dedications was always in order. The people adored their war heroes, and a hero's first duty to himself, as Bronson Black often remarked, was to keep his reputation alive.

How did Black know about all of these affairs?

The efficient Mr. Webb kept an ear to the ground. He even managed to angle invitations for the air ace—tactfully, of course.

Ben Gleed, pondering these things, marvelled at Mr. Webb's thoroughness in taking care of affairs that didn't matter. But Gleed was in no position to recommend a staff shake-up.

However, it was not many days before the impetuous young city manager became so thoroughly fed up with this state of affairs that he decided to appeal to the London public. Ever since his arrival the newspapers and radios had pressed him for a statement. Since the three committeemen were too much preoccupied to listen to his counsel, perhaps a sharp radio speech would act as a shot in the arm.

The radio talk was scheduled for eight o'clock on a Monday evening. The efficient Mr. Webb took care of all the details.

"How many radios are there in England, Mr. Webb?" Ben Gleed asked.

"One to every eleven and a half persons," said Webb after a few solemn blinks.

"That sounds high for a country that's just come through a devastating war."

"Quite high, Mr. Gleed. You see, all of these new wheeled houses being shipped in from America are equipped with radios."

"Um-m-m. What American company, Mr. Webb, is supplying all of these new wheels for England to live on?"

"I believe that information, sir, is not being divulged to the public—"

"And the gas and oil—"

"No information seems to be available on that score, Mr. Gleed."

"Um-m-m. Strange I haven't run across any financial reports—"

"What's that, sir?"

"Never mind," said Gleed, and went to work on his speech. By noon he laid the draft on Vernon Webb's desk for typing. This was Saturday. He ambled down to the Warwick lobby, rented a new auto-house for a weekend drive. He was curious to know more of this new restless, rolling, post-war population of England, and curious to

see the new mobile cafes, hospitals, filling stations, and grocery stores that were said to be on the road.

Sunday evening, driving back toward London along the Cardiff highway, Glead came upon a frightful accident. An old automobile swung off the road, probably as a result of a low tire, and crashed down a treacherous rocky embankment.

The family of five were all dead, their bodies badly lacerated.

Other vehicles quickly gathered at the spot, an ambulance was hailed, the bodies were taken back to Cardiff, and Ben Glead went on his way.

WHEN Ben Glead had walked out of the conference room at noon the previous day, the New London planners' headquarters were left solely to Mr. Webb, who fairly pounced upon the manuscript of Glead's radio speech.

Webb read it three times without seeing a thing. Then his bulbous eyes began to float fondly over the open paragraphs. At once he was perspiring with a strange eagerness.

Glead's speech began:

*"I did not come to England with the expectation of frightening you. But something I have seen since my arrival has shocked me deeply. It would not be fair of me to leave you in ignorance of this new danger that threatens you. I must tell you the worst.*

*"Citizens of London, there is a bestial fiend abroad in England, feeding fat upon people who fail to get into motion. That fiend is DELAY! . . ."*

THE planners' headquarters were cleared early Monday afternoon. The three committeemen, absorbed in their own affairs, had not found time to accept Glead's invitation to preview his speech. They would listen in at eight.

After they were gone, Mr. Webb announced to Glead that all arrangements were ready. A microphone had been installed in Glead's own suite on the Warwick's fifth floor, so that the radio statement could be delivered in complete comfort.

"I didn't request complete comfort," Glead snapped, eyeing the executive secretary suspiciously.

"No offense, I hope," said Webb suavely. "If you prefer some other arrangement—"

"Let it go," said Glead, his suspicions easing. "I'll speak from my suite."

"The buzzer will signal you to come in," said Webb.

"Okay. I'll go over this script to time it to my allotted fifteen minutes." Glead took the stairs up to fifth.

Vernon Webb, again in full possession of the planning offices, made swift use of his time. He phoned the newspapers, got six of them on the wire at once, talked to them like a machine-gun.

"I can't tell it to you. Don't release a thing till Ben Glead's speech. He'll break the news. He's *scen* it. But he won't say much. It's too gruesome—"

"What the hell are you talking about?" the newsmen shouted over the wires.

"All I can say is, watch your murders. Watch your accidents. Keep on the lookout for any strange stories about monsters."

"Monsters?"

"From all I can get out of him, it was a misshapen creature—a man-eater—a fiend that slips up on people when they're standing or sitting still—not when they're moving or riding—"

The newsmen snorted and grumbled. What was this, some madman's hoax?

"You don't think Ben Glead came over here to make a fool of himself, do you? He's *scen* it, I tell you."

"Where?"

"I don't know. Follow up your strange murders and accidents. That's all I can tell you."

BY EIGHT o'clock that evening the English news industry was virtually on fire with waiting for a big sensational story to break.

"My friends of England," said Ben Gleed into the microphone, "it is a privilege to speak to such a valiant people as you have again proved yourselves to be. I have only a few words to say. . .

"I did not come to England with the expectation of frightening you. But something I have seen. . ."

Into a million radios went the clear, cool words of Ben Gleed. Even the veteran orator Estep, cruising along in his new auto-house, admired the pace and strength of the young man's words. A good speech was, to Estep, rarer than good food and wine. He turned into an auto park, cut off his engine, gave his full attention to his radio.

The whole parkful of auto-houses, Estep noted with satisfaction, were bringing in the same station.

*I must tell you the worst. . .*

Edwin Estep scowled. What was this going to be, an exposé?

*Citizens of London, there is a bestial fiend abroad in England, feeding fat upon people who fail to get into motion!*

There was a sharp click, then a new voice sounded.

*Ladies and gentlemen, this brief statement came to you direct from the lips of Ben Gleed. Mr. Gleed refuses to describe the hideous man-killing monster in further detail. He hopes that this word of warning will save many lives that might otherwise be brutally victimized. Listen to your regular newscasts for further developments. And remember Mr. Gleed's*

*words, the bestial fiend feeds only upon people who are not in motion. If you are moving or riding you have no cause to fear.*

"What in the name of the streamlined devil!" Edwin Estep sputtered. "That didn't make sense. Someone cut Gleed off before he was started."

But no one was listening to the irate little orator's ravings. Everyone in the neighborhood of the auto park was looking out for himself. Indeed, the same thing was true of people far and wide across England. It isn't a pleasant surprise to be told that a weird, flesh-hungry monstrosity might be entering your autohouse or slipping out from under your bed.

All at once the radio newscaster unleashed a volley of terrorizing news all over the country.

Don't be alarmed, they continually warned. Just be on the alert. There was very little detail as yet, they insisted, though a mysterious murder in the Manchester brickyards, and two other unaccountable killings within thirty miles of Manchester looked very bad indeed. And there was an automobile accident on the Cardiff road yesterday in which all five occupants of the car were horribly and mysteriously lacerated. This and other strange accidents were being investigated. A fuller description of the monster would be broadcast as soon as possible.

In the meantime, the newscasters concluded, keep on the alert and *keep moving*.

"MONSTER, my eye!" little Edwin Estep snarled. He started his motor, whipped his auto-house out of the park onto the highway, made for the nearest roadside telephone. For the next thirty minutes he tried to find out who had cut into Ben Gleed's speech. The broadcasting companies relayed his

calls from one official to another, but the radio offices were being suddenly deluged with telephone calls and Estep failed to get the desired information.

"It had all the earmarks of a frame-up," Estep growled to himself.

"I agree," said a familiar voice back of him. He turned to see Bronson Black following him out of the roadside station. Bronson Black was fighting mad. "I'll know that voice if I ever hear it again, and believe me, I'll choke it off."

"Who in the name of the streamlined devil would do such a thing?" Estep ranted. "Gleed's here as a friend. He has no enemies in England. But some lowdown snake's belly gave his speech a chop and a twist and turned it into a fiend scare. If I—"

"Look!" Bronson Black gasped.

"What?"

"That traffic jam. Everybody's on the move. *They fell for it*. If they keep moving the monster won't get them—remember?"

For the next fifteen minutes the two men stood watching the streams of mobile living quarters flow and jam at the highway intersection.

Finally Bronson Black said, "I won't make that date tonight with this traffic. I'd better call her."

Estep guessed that the traffic might get worse instead of better as the night went on, so he got into the swim. Black tried to call his girl-friend, but by this time telephone service was out of the question. Telephone girls weren't immune to the mania of "getting into motion."

On Tuesday the tempo of the roving mania had quickened. On his way to the Warwick, Estep saw few persons who were not in motion. The streams of traffic had grown heavier, street loafers ambled along instead of standing still, bank tellers paced in their cages, the Warwick lobby's chairs were empty.

In the conference room Estep found Bronson Black champing angrily on a pipistem.

"Whoever started this damned terror ought to hang," the R.A.F. veteran growled. "The gal-friend is probably sore as hell at me because I couldn't make it last night. Tonight I'm tied up again."

"I hope she wasn't taken in on this fiend hoax," said Estep.

"Hard to tell," said Black. "All my friends claim it's nothing but a cheap joke to them, but I notice they keep on the move. It's taken the country by storm. . . Kandenfield won't be in this morning."

"Don't tell me he's bought an auto-house and gone on the road."

"No, he's got a boy driving him around in circles in his old black carriage. I stopped by his country home to pick him up, but the boy said he was asleep on the back cushion half buried under bottles, and the lad's orders were to keep moving."

"Ye gods! What kind of contagious disease—" Estep broke off, glowering first at Bronson Black, then at Vernon Webb. Estep's black mustaches twitched, something which happened only at the rare moments when the orator found himself in doubt. "Hell, you don't suppose there *is* a—a devilish monstrosity—"

VERNON WEBB put in a telling punch. "The morning papers carry a very gruesome story, Mr. Estep. The Williamson family that met death on the Cardiff road were partly consumed—"

"Buncombe!" the war hero growled. "If this rot doesn't clear up in a couple days I'll get a plane and comb England from end to end just to prove—"

"Then you're admitting this fiend *is* a possibility," Estep said sharply.

"I'm admitting nothing. Ben Gleed has been duped."

The owl-eyed executive secretary cleared his throat. "The morning papers have pieced together the Williamson tragedy. The first man who stopped at the scene is believed to have been Ben Gleed. If so, he had a chance to see with his own eyes the bestial fiend—"

"Where is Gleed? Let's get to the bottom of this thing."

"He's in his suite, Mr. Estep, studying blueprints," said Webb. "He mentioned he was undertaking a period of concentrated study and was not to be disturbed unless his opinions on the New London plan were being urgently solicited."

Estep groaned. If there was anything more urgently needed than to stop the profuse waste of petrol and oil and motorcars bought on credit from America, it was a plan for New London. Why had the people fallen for this hare-brained terror story, Estep asked. Black's answer was that they were in the psychological mood to fall for anything. Estep nodded.

"Until they settle in permanent habitats and get rid of this restless, rootless, roving complex, they'll jump at the sight of their own shadows. As soon as we build London up—"

"As soon as we build London *down*," Bronson Black corrected. . .

NEWSPAPERS tried to be conservative about the matter. They editorialized with cynical quips so as not to be caught looking foolish if the fiend should turn out to be an escaped ape from a circus, or an escaped criminal with an unshaven face.

But newspaper and radios could not ignore the obvious facts that mounted through all of that week—and the next. The vast majority of English people

were spending their days and nights on wheels. Only while in motion did they feel safe. All manners of business had taken to the highways. Doctors set up their equipments in auto-houses, banks sent branch units out to do business on the roads, newspapers loaded their lighter presses on heavy trucks.

If this could be called a city, it was unlike any city that had ever existed before. It was a vast aggregate of urban equipment turned mobile. It was a city whose parts were no more stable than electrons in an atom.

(The newspaper that made this comparison apologized to the atom. Its electrons maintained a semblance of organization; the electrons of London simply floated over pavements, losing all sense of relationships.)

Statistics showed an unbelievable rise in the number of motorcars purchased—but more shiploads arrived from America daily.

The charts on consumption of petrol and oil skyrocketed out of bounds. Some unnamed American corporation continued to offer fuel and credit in unlimited quantities, for the masses of terrorized Englanders were in no mood to haggle over terms.

But the most sensational day-to-day news was the terrific increase in highway deaths. The fiend was a killer. To turn off your motor and sleep by the roadside was to invite death. "Keep moving, keep living," the fearsome slogans read.

For every conservative editorial that attributed the death rise to a nonexistent bogey, a dozen stories painted blood-chilling details that restored the fiend's reality.

The fiend had evolved, by the end of the first week, to become a lizard-like creature one-half taller than a man, armored in tough natural scales that resisted bullets.

The fiend's hair was like fish fins. His eyes were dull red like cigarettes burning in the dark—only larger—like automobile tail-lights.

His mouth was like a gash in a tin bucket. His teeth were like sharpened ice cubes.

His killing weapons were his arms, which were ribbon-shaped and flexible like leather, but as sharp-edged as any razor.

**A**FTER the terror-stricken testimonials of several witnesses to tragedies in which this fiend was said to have operated, this picture became the standard and accepted version. Newspaper artists painted him so that people would know what to watch out for when they stopped to change a tire.

Hoodlums and criminals lost no time turning the country-wide terror to their advantage. Any murder that was sufficiently brutal was sure to be blamed on the bloodthirsty fiend. Scared witnesses, who, under ordinary circumstances, might have been able to identify a robber or murderer, were always confusing what they saw with the mental image of a lizard-like monster with knife-like arms. . . .

Gleed remained in his suite studying blueprints and models for day on end. His studies had begun right after his broadcast. At the end of that fifteen minutes of speaking he had first eaten a postponed supper which a waiter brought up to him, then had sauntered down to the Warwick lobby to see how his speech had been received. But to his surprise he had found all the chairs empty.

Stopping in at the conference room he had found the owlish Vernon Webb in a great perspiration to handle all the incoming telephone calls, but Webb refused Gleed's offer to help.

"Your speech made a tremendous im-

pression," Webb said hastily. "You stunned them."

"Good," said Gleed. "That's all I wanted to know. Save my mail and newspapers and stall off all reporters and visitors for a few days. I'm going to lock myself in until this New London plan comes clear."

So it was that Ben Gleed remained in ignorance of the fact that only the opening sentences of his speech reached the public ear.

Late that week he called Kandenfield in and listened to that slightly inebriated gentleman present an argument for a widespread city without any vulnerable skyscrapers, and without any disgraceful reversions to the underground life of the cave man.

As Kandenfield was taking leave he asked, "So you've seen the fiend?"

"No time for movies," Ben Gleed snapped. "I'm getting down to business on this plan."

"You can have my authority," said Kandenfield. "This fiend story has got me so wrought up I'm a dead loss."

"You'd better stick to musical comedies," said Gleed, and he wondered why Kandenfield gave him such a strange look.

The following day Gleed conferred at great length with Estep, who also expressed willingness for the young city manager to solve the deadlock, and agreed to abide by Gleed's decision.

"Down, out, or up," said Estep agreeably. "Anything but round and round. Have you seen the graphs on this week's rise in motorcars? It doesn't make sense. That fiend is going to turn out to be as costly as a bloomin' navy. By the way, have you any idea who pulled that hoax? I'm sure you didn't mean for your speech to be twisted out of joint."

Ben Gleed frowned, but he gave his square jaw a solid thrust. "I didn't



say a thing I didn't mean. Whether you liked it or not, it was the truth, Estep."

"The bloomin' truth, you say." Estep's mustaches twitched as he gave Glead a searching stare. Then he went on his way.

THE word "fiend" gnawed at Glead's mind. Both Estep and Kandenfield had spoken of a fiend. Now Glead remembered having referred to the "fiend of delay" in his radio talk. Could these men have been quoting his figure of speech?

That was the blunt question which Ben Glead put to Bronson Black when their conference opened one morning a few days later.

"You're fiend's all over England," Black growled. "It's a hellova mess. Nothing like it since the Dancing Mania of the Middle Ages. Every man, woman, and child is haunted by a red-eyed, flesh-hungry spook."

Ben Glead's eyes narrowed to puzzled slits. "Once again, please—slowly."

Black sketched the whole story, winding up with, "I'll know that damned voice that cut in on you if I ever hear it again."

"Why didn't some of you tell me about this before? Why didn't Vernon Webb—"

"You weren't to be disturbed," said Black. "But don't worry, the show's going strong. At the rate homes and businesses are taking to wheels, London'll be a thing of the past in a few weeks. Don't ask me what's happened to England's nerve centers."

"The New London!" Glead muttered. "Let's get to work."

For three days he continued his conferences with Bronson Black. The war ace was next to immovable. He foresaw future wars too clearly to relax

his demands for an underground city.

"The other two committeemen have authorized me to act for them in preparing a compromise plan," said Glead finally. "Will you do the same?"

"I trust your good judgment, Glead," said Bronson Black. "But I've been through a war. You haven't."

"So?"

"I'll think it over and let you know."

Glead was beginning to understand how Nazi bombers felt trying to make head against the R.A.F. "Black, the war is over," he said pointedly. "But you're still living in it. Are you going to keep on the rest of your life?"

"My gal-friend asks me that too," said Black. "Now I'll ask you one. What are you going to do about this fiend terror?"

"Tell the people the truth," said Glead.

"How soon?"

"As soon as the New London plan is ready. I recommend a big mass meeting. I'm afraid I wouldn't trust the radio a second time. By the way, could I meet your girl-friend?"

"Hell, I wish you'd pay her a visit for me. I've been so damned busy—"

IT WAS the first time in more than a week that Ben Glead had left his blueprint-strewn suite. He stopped in at the conference room, glanced at his business mail. A letter from his assistant manager of Super City assured him that all was well; the gestures of friendship from Oil Center were on the increase.

An hour later he was cruising along the traffic-filled highway with pretty Mary Armstrong, the air veteran's girl-friend. They discussed the strange incidents that had conjured up the absurd fiend terror, and the suppressed angers welled up in Ben Glead as he learned how straight-thinking citizens

had been shaken into the maelstrom of hideous fears.

Yes, the show was still going full blast. Mary Armstrong pointed out a restaurant truck that kept in motion while orders were taken and meals served. In an auto-house a party of women were having afternoon tea—under difficulties; but if their chauffeur stopped for a light, one of the ladies would screech at him.

A dog howled at the door of a deserted house beside the highway. Packs of homeless dogs, Mary had heard, were forming in some deserted country regions. Crying children and wild-eyed grown-ups were often to be seen wherever cars were stalled. Many house-trailers were crowded with a cow and chickens. Ben Gleed wondered if cows and chickens could be persuaded to "give" under those conditions.

Mary drove up to a newspaper truck, bought an evening paper, asked Ben to read her the news as they rolled along. He found some curious items about babies that had been born in moving automobiles, operations that had been performed over rolling wheels, complaints from spectacles customers that lenses couldn't be ground properly in moving trucks. And the roving mania had brought a sharp upturn in the spectacles business. Eyes were being put to new strains.

Ben Gleed was dumbfounded by it all. "How in the name of common sense," he asked, "can a nation that has stiffened its back against bombs go haywire over a bogey?"

"I think it's the aftermath," said Mary Armstrong. "We're still keyed up to expect violence. We've been shaken loose from all the realities of the past. We've learned to expect anything. I hope that as soon as New London is built up—"

"Up, did you say?"

"Or down," Mary smiled. "Of course I have to be loyal to Bronson's views."

"What are your own views, Mary?"

The girl made a saucy face at Gleed, but as he talked with her he discovered that she was deeply troubled.

"No imaginary fiend could ever haunt me like the thought of having to live in an underground city," she said. "I couldn't live away from the sun and stars. To me a London underground would be an everlasting shadow of death."

"Even if there were future wars," said Gleed, "death would stalk the underground city. Bronson still thinks in terms of this war, and the safety of its air raid shelters. But an underground London could be as obsolete a defense as the Maginot Line in a future war of gas . . . disease . . . nerves."

"If I only had the nerve to tell Bronson—"

"You've got to tell him," said Ben Gleed. "That's what New London is waiting for. . ."

THE owl-eyed Mr. Webb was standing at Ben Gleed's desk opening Gleed's business mail when the young city manager strode in.

"I told you to lay off my mail," Gleed snapped. His left arm straightened out to thrust the innocent-faced executive secretary against the wall.

"I say," Webb wailed, "you Americans aren't too courteous—"

"You ought to know," Gleed barked. "You're as much American as I am. Talk fast, Webb. I want the lowdown on that broadcast."

Webb talked fast, but the more he talked, the more Ben Gleed's eyes pierced him with disbelief.

The instant Gleed went out, mail in hand, Webb turned to the telephone, dictated a cablegram. "B. G. on war path. But I hold trump weapon—"

mob."

Gleed also sent a cablegram, having read an urgent communication from his assistant manager back in Super City.

"By all means do not extend financial credit to Oil Center," Gleed cabled. "Why should they make such a request? Investigate thoroughly, cable me soon as possible."

New oil and gasoline shipments arrived daily, but the reserve supplies in England were gradually being depleted. The wheels of roving England began to turn more slowly.

Ben Gleed had once declared he would chance no more radio speeches, but after his talk with the slippery Mr. Webb he was inflamed with a new determination. Mr. Webb did not make the arrangements. Ben Gleed secured the largest stadium in the vicinity of the Thames. He circulated all England with posters that challenged the people to attend, or to listen to the broadcast.

**"IS THERE A FIEND STALKING AMONG US? WHERE DOES IT LURK? HOW CAN IT BE SEEN? WHEN WILL IT BE KILLED?"**

**"BEN GLEED WILL ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS SATURDAY NIGHT.**

**"STADIUM WILL BE HEAVILY GUARDED. THE SAFETY OF EVERY PERSON IS GUARANTEED. IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND, LISTEN IN."**

The announcement was indorsed by Messrs. Estep, Kandenfield, and Black, who were in full accord with Ben Gleed's plan.

**M**ULTITUDES of persons who gravitated toward the stadium on that memorable Saturday night, four weeks after the roving mania had swept over England, were reassured by the sight of new guard towers high above each section of stadium seats. At the

windows of each tower uniformed guards could be seen standing stiffly.

And so the stadium filled to overflowing with thousands of citizens to whom the solid exercise of stadium-sitting was an almost forgotten pleasure.

Thousands more thronged the gates or took the surrounding hillsides for a view of what the stadium contained.

White and gleaming under the floodlights, a new miniature London filled the entire inner stadium grounds. The layout was large enough that every spectator could see the essence of the plan for himself. Miniature flags flew from the model government buildings. Little columns of smoke rose from the area of heavy industries. Model trains moved along the lanes of gleaming rails. The effect was breath-taking.

The meeting opened on the dot. The few thousand persons who were close enough to the small speaker's platform saw that the bombastic little Estep carried a full head of steam as he took charge.

They also noted a similar eagerness in the countenances of Messrs. Black and Gleed, a comfortable readiness in the languid eyes of John Kandenfield, a certain inspiring radiance in the face of the pretty girl who sat beside the R.A.F. hero.

However, the most interesting study in expressions was furnished by the owl-eyed gentleman sitting not too comfortably at the end of the row of dignitaries. This man drubbed his puffy fingers on the arm of his chair and kept up a not-too-subtle eye communication with any of five or six heavy-set men near the front of the audience.

Little Edwin Estep pranced back and forth past the rows of microphones and spoke to the tense stadium in an easy, friendly tone. He warmed up on the subject of the English war victory. Then he began to delve into surprise ideas on

the possibilities of New London. He was like a magician pulling flags and rabbits out of unexpected places.

As he talked, the floodlights dimmed over the model city and a single bright spot shifted from one point to another, coordinating perfectly with his words.

"This plan is a blend of three plans," he explained. "Through the cooperative service of Ben Glead, the countless pressures for various types of New Londons have been woven into a single unified system. We shall build up, we shall build out, and to a limited extent we shall build down.

"We shall build safeguards against future wars, but we shall build with the expectation that most of our years will be spent in peace and the pursuit of happiness."

In turn, Estep called upon Kandenfield and Bronson Black to explain certain phases of the plan, and the audience, following the shifting spotlight from railway stations to chemical plants to auto parks, from hotels to spacious rows of landscaped homes, relaxed its tension and fears.

**B**EN GLEED could literally feel the change that came over these thousands of listeners. There was such a thing as group-imagination, he thought. These people were rebounding to solid hopes and ideals.

Glead cast his eyes about the speaker's platform. He had hoped to receive a reply from his Super City assistant before this, and he had ordered all cablegrams to be delivered to himself personally. He noticed the nervous twitch of Vernon Webb's fingers.

Now Estep brought the discussion of New London to a rousing finish.

"If this plan is officially adopted—"

Estep's thundering words were drowned in a roar of cheering.

"If this plan is adopted, and I think

it will be—"

There were minutes of roaring applause before Estep could finish his sentence. He concluded with a promise that construction would begin immediately after the official adoption.

Then he silenced the multitude and turned their attention back to the matter which had brought them here. "I call upon Mr. Glead."

The expectant thousands went silent as Ben Glead stepped to the microphones.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the young city manager began slowly, his eyes sweeping from the guard towers, down across the sea of faces, down to the very speaker's platform where Vernon Webb sat a few feet to one side of him blinking at the front rows, "*this* time I will have several thousand witnesses to what I have to say. If my speech of four weeks ago had not been cut off, you would have known that the only fiend *I* referred to was the *figurative* fiend of DELAY.

"Fortunately, that fiend is dead. So is the fiend of DEADLOCK. When they died, New London was born.

"But the silly phantom fiend that someone created never existed. I saw the Williamson family's tragic accident. There was no fiend except a soft tire that threw the car over the embankment. The car was not stalled; it was in motion.

"Consider the ingenuity, if you will, that went into the invention of this silly bogey. The fiend was said to attack only persons who were not moving. The commercial motive back of this lie is as clear as daylight. Buy cars—buy auto-houses — buy gasoline and oil. Keep moving to save your lives—and incidentally pile up profits for some American corporation.

"Tonight you were persuaded to come and sit here because towers of guards

protected you. Let me confide a secret. Those uniformed figures in the towers are only dummies. You have been sitting for more than two hours—completely unmolested, I believe, by any bloodthirsty monstrosities—”

Something moved disturbingly among the model buildings of the miniature New London. A small section of the structure heaved upward, folded back, revealed a huge lizard-like figure coming up out of the ground. It rose up on two feet.

Screams and gasps cut through the sea of gaping spectators. But above the startled outcries sounded the guttural, flesh-chilling, soulless screech of the monstrous lizard.

*“Who next, Gleed? Who next?”* The coarse voice screamed it over and over.

FULLY four-fifths of the vast audience sat tight, mystified or suspicious. The other fifth broke into terror-stricken panic. But there was no use to run. The monster was not moving toward the audience, he was plodding straight for the speaker’s platform.

“It’s a fake!” Ben Gleed yelled into the microphones. “Fake! Fake! I’ll fight it single-handed.”

But there was too much pandemonium for anyone to be swerved by words. Ben Gleed flung off his coat.

The monster turned around for a look at the audience, displaying his ice-cube teeth, his glowing red eyes. He waved his leather ribbons of arms threateningly and again the terrorized screams swept through the stadium.

Both Gleed and Bronson Black were racing toward the monster. But certain husky men in the front rows were closer. They leaped down and grappled with the monster before anyone else had a chance. Six of them pounced at once. The monster went down, wobbling his

head, uttering a bloody shriek that choked off as he fell.

Then, like clockwork, the six men grabbed up the prone monster, carried him out of the stadium grounds with a rush that was dazzling. The frantic, screaming fifth of the audience broke into wild cheering. But the undertones were groans and harsh mutterings.

“Members of my R.A.F. squad,” Bronson Black barked into the microphones. “Meet me at the east gate. Let’s explode this thing.”

Black was off like a bolt of lightning. The men who had played hero and rushed the stunned fiend off the field had tossed him into a waiting car, the headlights of which could be seen whirling across the hill road toward the highway.

Other men had rushed down from the stadium seats with a show of bravery, and some of them now leaped for the microphones.

“You heard what that fiend said,” one of them yelled. “He asked Gleed whom to kill next. He’s Gleed’s pet. Gleed brought him to England. Let’s mob Gleed—”

*Thump.* Amplified by the stadium’s loudspeakers, Gleed’s short left to the man’s jaw sounded like a locomotive collision.

“Mob Gleed! Mob Gleed!” The shouts rang out from fifteen or twenty men as they rushed out to the speaker’s platform. In the face of that onrush Ben Gleed heard Mary Armstrong’s stifled cry of fear. Bronson Black was gone. John Kandenfield was thinking of going. The bristling little Estep was scrapping for a microphone, shouting, “Frame-up. Are you going to let these hoodlums get away with it?”

SEVERAL hundred staunch English citizens looked down upon the flood-lighted model London and decided they

weren't. They marched down in a spontaneous citizen's army. By the time they reached Ben Glead, his fists had accounted for five of the mobsters but he was being sandbagged by six more. The citizen's army nabbed some of them, chased the others off the grounds.

Ben Glead flung his tousled hair out of his eyes, leaped back to the microphones.

"Thanks," he panted. "Looks like you're through with being gullible. I guess you've had you fill of being preyed on by schemesters. I congratulate you."

Then Ben Glead, catching sight of the squirming owl-eyed executive secretary, unleashed his suspicions, pointed an accusing finger at Webb. "Your mob didn't come off, did it, Mr. Webb? The English people didn't fall for your lynching scheme."

Glead's accusations boomed through the loudspeakers, and so did Webb's stammered denials. But Ben Glead's fighting spirit was up. He grabbed the executive secretary by the shoulders, jerked him up to the microphones.

"Tell them why you cut into my broadcast!" Glead growled, shaking the fellow until his head flopped like a punching bag. "Tell them why you invented a fiend to make them buy cars—"

"Stop it! Stop it!" Webb howled.

"Tell them why you clogged the planning committee. Tell them why you rigged up a fake fiend to break in on this meeting—"

"Wait! Stop! Don't—"

Bronson Black and some of his fellow veterans sped into the stadium grounds in a car decorated with flapping leather arms, a false face with teeth like ice cubes, an empty lizard costume, a head-dress of fish fins. The car roared up to the speaker's platform under an up-

roarious cheer. Black vaulted out and bounded up to the microphones.

"Is anybody scared of that lizard outfit?" he yelled, and the stadium rocked with laughter. "The hoodlum that wore it, and his pals that carted him off said they'd leave all the talking to our friend Mr. Webb."

"Talk fast, Webb!" Ben Glead snapped. "Tell them why you've been opening my mail."

"It was all my own idea," said Webb, and he began to fabricate cotton-candy excuses. He talked fast. His voice grew tight. It was the same voice that had once cut into Glead's broadcast. Bronson Black and several thousand other listeners would have known it anywhere.

"That will do," said Glead, cutting in abruptly, for he had just glanced into a cablegram a messenger had handed him. "Don't strain yourself any farther, Mr. Webb. I'll straighten your story out."

The blinking executive secretary mopped his brow and retreated to his seat.

"ONCE upon a time, ladies and gentlemen," said Ben Glead, half-smiling at the ironic news he was about to deliver, "an industrial city named Oil Center became jealous of Super City, and resorted to unscrupulous methods to outdo Super City's success. I have just learned that the Mr. Webb, who a moment ago tried to take all the credit — or blame — for the roving mania—came to you during the war as the secret representative of Oil City.

"Mr. Webb's job was to make sure that New London's most profitable dollars went to Oil Center. How well Mr. Webb has done for his city you may judge for yourselves. The joker is, that riding around on wheels doesn't pay bills. This cablegram informs me that

Oil Center is on the verge of economic collapse.

"Do you think the fiend is dead? You've had a joyride. Oil Center will expect you to pay for it. I wish you luck, but I predict that the ghost of this fiend will haunt England for a long time to come. Good night."

Souvenir seekers raced down from the stadium to clamor for bits of the fiend costume the minute the meeting ended; but for the most part the thronged thousands were a fairly quiet and thoughtful group as they departed. At least that was the impression that commentators gave out to radio listeners all over the land.

"You were wonderful, Mr. Gleed," said Mary Armstrong. "Next to Bronson you're about the most remarkable person I know."

"Bronson's not too disappointed over

that?" Gleed pointed to the surrounding model of New London.

"He's as thrilled as I am," the girl laughed. "He's promised me a little penthouse on top of a skyscraper."

After Ben Gleed had thanked Black, Kandenfield, and Estep for their fine support through the hour of crisis, he turned to see the disconsolate figure of Vernon Webb sitting on the model railway station with his feet in the Thames.

"Waiting for a train?" Gleed asked.

"Mr. Gleed," said Webb plaintively, rubbing his sore neck, "Oil Center can't even send me money to come home on—and I'm not safe here—"

"If it's any help I'll buy you a row-boat—or a freighter passage to—say, Africa or—"

"Africa's okay, Mr. Gleed," said Webb. "Just some quiet little cannibal village. . . ."

## HOWIE LEMP

### *Meets an Enchantress*

"Come!" the Leanhau Shae—the beautiful, irresistible maiden, said softly. . . . Howie wavered. . . . Mazie snuggled her peroxide head closer to him. . . . "Get out," he said to the Leanhau Shae. "We'd like to be alone."

For a silent instant the Leanhau Shae glared at him furiously. . . . Then she whipped the white gown about her shoulders, stepped back and—vanished!

What comes next in the amazing chain of events that have made a Hollywood producer of soda-jerk Howie Lemp?

She lived for love—the Leanhau Shae! . . . As long as men were indifferent to her charms, she was their slave. . . . And she chose Howie as her lover! . . . You'll enjoy every moment of his thrill-packed adventures in "Howie Lemp Meets an Enchantress" by William P. McGivern, one of six top-notch stories in the

FEBRUARY ISSUE

# **fantastic**

## **ADVENTURES**



ON SALE AT ALL NEWSSTANDS DECEMBER 19th!

# MR. WISEL'S




It was the strangest label ever seen on a traveling bag!



# SECRET

by **ERIC  
FRANK RUSSELL**



**T**HERE were six of us in the stuffy compartment of the old-fashioned railroad coach. The compartment was one of those five-seats-a-side affairs dating back a couple of decades, and the coach itself was a lumbering monstrosity of the kind that occasionally gets exhumed to relieve abnormal pressure on rolling stock.

Opposite me sat a fat man named Joe. I knew that was his name because he was so addressed by the slightly less fat man squatting at his side. The latter's name was Al. The opposing corner of the same seat was occupied by a traveling salesman with weary but calculating eyes. Facing him, at the other end of my own seat, was a young couple married just long enough to converse without cooing.

For the last seventy miles Joe and Al had analyzed the political situation in reverberating understones and with sweaty morbidity. The salesman had divided his attention between their conversation, a dog-eared copy of the *Heat-*

***THE little man was quite a practical  
joker. He had a killer-diller of an answer  
when asked about that trunk label***

ing *Engineer's Manual*, and the young couple's amateurish impression of marital old-timers.

With many rumbles and several jolts the long train snaked its way through a grid of maybe fifty criss-crossing lines. Air hissed under the coaches as they came to a stop. Joe and Al fell silent. We could hear doors banging and slamming as people got out and others got in.

"Manhanigan," said the salesman, rubbing condensation from his window and peering through. "And it's raining like the very devil."

Then the door to our compartment was suddenly jerked open and a little man scrambled in. Carefully, he closed the door behind him, beamed upon us all, selected a seat on the side opposite me, halfway between Al and the drummer.

"Some downpour," he remarked, mopping rain from his face with a large, purple handkerchief. "Beautiful!" He beamed again, and sighed ecstatically. "All that water!"

In the usual way, all eyes examined the newcomer. He was a new factor in our idle hour, a fresh circumstance to relieve our boredom. Erect and amiable, his small feet set together on the floor, he sat nursing his bag on his lap and tolerated our scrutiny.

He had a plump, clean-shaven face surrounding a puckish mouth. His hair was iron-gray, rather long, very curly. His torso was small, slightly paunchy, and his legs were just long enough to reach the floor. Only his eyes were remarkable: they were very alert, very much alive.

"Train's rather late, folks," he said, brightly.

"We're running twelve minutes behind schedule," the salesman informed. "There's trouble higher up the line." He leaned sidewise, tried to

look discreetly at the little man's bag.

"Too bad," said the little man. "Promptitude is one essential of efficiency."

"And what," asked the salesman, grinning, "might be the others?"

"Energy, foresight and imagination," responded the little man, complacently. He smiled paternally upon the young couple, who immediately resumed their interest in each other.

The salesman subsided, riffled the pages of his book. Joe ceased his rumblings at Al, said, "Huh?" and stared across his companion's stomach toward the newly arrived oracle. The little man shifted his sociable beam to me.

IT WAS then I noticed his bag. The salesman was still sneaking looks at it. An unusual bag. It was cylindrical in shape, with a handle in the middle of its length, and it seemed to be made of a very exotic type of snakeskin. There wasn't any visible opening, nor anything that looked like a lock. I could just glimpse a brilliantly colored sticker on the end nearest the salesman.

After a couple of minutes, I lost interest, rubbed the window, watched the rain-drenched scenery as it rushed past at sixty miles an hour. We covered thirty miles before my attention returned. Al and Joe were now silent, sunk into a coma of porcine rumination. But the salesman was studying the imperturbable little man with furtive intensity, and the newlyweds also had their eyes upon him.

Following the young couple's gaze, I found they were looking at the bag. Its owner had turned it around in his lap so that its end now faced us. We could see the sticker plainly. It looked lurid. A printed piece of glossy paper about six inches by four, in brilliant colors, it depicted an enormous building resembling a great pink pyramid set with a

thousand windows. A bold line of wavy print ran underneath. The print looked like Arabic.

"How long," asked the little man, "will it take to Farburg?"

"About another ten minutes," I told him. He seemed anxious to converse. My eyes returned to the bag.

"Thank you very much," he responded, with extreme politeness. His smile was all-embracing.

Funny thing, that adornment on his bag. I'd been around plenty in my time, and had collected labels, tags and stickers all the way from Leopoldsville to Tongatabu—but I'd never seen one like the one he'd got. Neither had I ever encountered script of the sort printed under his picture. What was it, Persian, Sanscrit, Arabic or Bashi-Bazouk?

The salesman displayed more enterprise than any of us. Cocking an inquisitive eye, he said:

"Stranger around these parts?"

"Oh, quite!" assured the little man, very definitely.

He was willing enough to talk, but he wasn't making the conversation. That sticker of his tantalized me. Where did they use writing of that sort, and what was the country where they had skyscrapers like pink pyramids?

No harm in asking, anyway. I hated being thought unduly nosey—but he seemed far too easy-going to resent a question or two. The young couple were still staring fascinatedly at the label, the salesman was still fidgeting around in his attempts to examine it once more, and even Al and Joe were becoming conscious of the presence of something interesting. As the train hammered over a junction, the bag trembled on its owner's plump little knees. Colors shifted and flickered deep within the surface of the snake-skin.

"I BEG your pardon, Mr.—er—?"

"Wisel," said the little man, looking supremely gratified. "My name is Wisel."

"Thank you. Mine's Russell. I don't wish to appear impertinent, but that sticker you've got on your bag—"

"Ah, yes, the sticker," he said. "An hotel label. You know how they slap them on. Quite decorative when you have a collection."

"I'm curious concerning the building pictured on it."

"Oh, that!" Everyone was sitting up by now. "That's the Red Range Hotel."

"And the writing?" I persisted. "I must confess it's strange to me."

He beamed, and said:

"The writing is pure Comric, a streamlined script, what you might call a form of shorthand."

"Really?" I mouthed, completely defeated. "Thanks!" I gave it up. In a way, I felt sorry I'd asked.

He edged the bag around to a more comfortable position, still clinging to it tightly. Al and Joe now got a full view of the subject under discussion. The fat pair mooned at it unimaginatively. A strange silence pervaded the compartment and remained while the train snaked a bend and trundled into Farburg. I got up, struggled into my raincoat, made ready to depart. So did the little man.

The salesman couldn't stand it any longer. His calculating eyes became desperate as the mysterious Wisel stood by the door, bag in one hand, waiting for the train to stop.

"Say, mister, where in hell is the Red Range Hotel, and who in hell writes pure Comric?"

The train stopped.

"Mars and the Martians," said Wisel, calmly. Then he opened the door and stepped out.

I got out right behind him, glanced

back into the compartment. Al and Joe were glooming through the open door with slightly shocked expressions. Back of them, the drummer was leaning forward addressing the newlyweds with much bitterness.

He was saying to them:

"See that? He comes along with a gag and I bite! Doggone it, he walks in with a gag and I bite on it!"

**I** CAUGHT up with the little man as he trotted swiftly toward the exit. He looked up and smiled as he saw me.

"You don't believe it," he asserted, happily. "Neither does anyone else. It's handy, you know. Enables me to go places without overmuch bother."

Hardly knowing what to make of him, I asked:

"Where are you going?"

"Looking around, looking around," he replied, airily. "Naturally, I wish to see all I can and learn all I can in the time that is available." He beamed up at me, his bag swinging in his hand. "D'you know, I was led to believe that I'd be hunted to death like a desert *yoggar*. But no! Not a soul believes anything, and that simplifies my task."

"Brother," I said, "It sure is an awfully hard story to swallow." We slowed down as the exiting crowd reached the bottleneck of the barrier. I got out my ticket.

He went in front of me. I was watching him closely, very closely. With the utmost nonchalance, he offered the

waiting collector an empty hand. Casually, the collector took nothing out of the hand, snipped the piece of invisibility with his clippers, tossed it into a box. Then he took my ticket.

I was still dazed when Wisel said:

"So pleased to have met you! Farewell!" and scrambled into a waiting hack.

My mind was in a whirl, mostly occupied with suspicions concerning my own sight. I looked at the hack, I looked at passers-by. He must have hypnotized that collector. There wasn't any other explanation.

The taxi's engine started up just as I reached it. I stuck my head in the window, opened my mouth to say something, found myself staring straight into the ireful eyes of a white-haired, full bosomed old dowager. She stabbed me through raised lorgnettes.

"Young man!" she snapped.

"Sorry, lady," I apologized.

Then the cab was off. I watched it purr down the ramp and into the street. Darn it, I'd seen Wisel get into that hack right under my very nose. He couldn't be a Martian—that was all baloney. And even if he was, he couldn't change himself at a moment's notice into a matronly old duck.

He just couldn't.

No, he couldn't.

*Couldn't he?*

Letting out a wild yell I rushed after that hack. Too late of course. Wisel or not, she'd been holding his bag.

## RED RAIN

**O**NE of the most persistent rumors to be circulated throughout the world since, literally, the dawn of Time, has been the story of bloody rain falling in great torrents to commemorate special occasions, or to warn the people of some impending catastrophe. Latest report has come from Clermont, France, several years ago. The natives set up a great howl one morning to discover the ground soaked with reddish liquid and more of it pelting down from the skies. It was believed to be the end of the world!

Homer, Virgil and Plutarch have all written of this phenomenon, describing it a shower of blood. Plutarch asserts that the "rain of blood" invariably followed great battles and that bloody vapors distilled from the bodies of the slain caused it.

Science has not proven just what *does* cause these bloody baths, but the consensus is that-traveling clouds of red dust become mixed with a downpour of rain, coloring it a bright cherry red. If Plutarch was right however, there should be plenty of "red rain" in Europe right now.

**THE IMMORTALITY OF  
ALAN WHIDDEN***(Continued from page 161)*

lower lip.

"Squire Whidden," he said, "I don't believe a word of all this hokum.— But, if you'll make it worth my while, I'll take the case."

"Always a hard horse-trader. Eh, Doc?" Whidden laughed. "Have I a mortgage on your place?"

"Why—yes."

"I might have known it." Whidden laughed again. He took a piece of paper from his pocket, scribbled on it for a moment, and handed it over. "Here's a receipt. Now I have no hold on you. Will you, as a *friend*, help me out?"

Dr. Cheney stared at him for one bewildered instant. Then, tears flowing down his chubby face, he held out one hand in mute agreement. Alan Whidden clasped it warmly.

CHENEY then hustled him home, and to bed for some pretended illness with a long Latin name. A middle-aged nurse—Whidden recognized her as the woman who had held the baby when he had peered through the window in 1890—was placed in charge. Joyce Piper came over, much alarmed; but received assurances from Dr. Cheney that all was well.

A few days later, the patient was permitted to sit up. One by one his neighbors and debtors came to see him, and were duly announced by Joyce or the nurse, and were studied and remembered by Whidden's retentive memory.

Every debtor who came, forthwith had his debt adjusted consistent with his capacity to pay.

"And now, dear," Whidden told Joyce, "you don't have to marry me unless you want to."

"You darling!" she replied, giving

his hand a squeeze. He drew her down to the invalid-chair in which he sat.

Gradually Whidden began to go out in the community. Gradually he made friends of those who had formerly been his enemies. Late in October he and Joyce Piper were married. And everyone in town gave her the full credit for the miraculous reformation which had taken place in "the Squire." Whatever wise, genial Dr. Cheney may have thought he kept to himself.

Throughout the winter, Alan let his mechanical abilities come into play, installing for himself and Joyce as nearly modern improvements as he dared adopt without getting too far ahead of the times, and helping to repair the broken-down farm machinery of all his neighbors. But mostly he and Joyce clung to each other as though foreseeing dimly some impending doom. Never had Grafton County known such a devoted couple.

The Whidden wealth was considerable, although somewhat in the nature of what New Englanders call "land poor." But now, with the friendly advice and assistance which Alan Whidden was able to give, out of his vast store of scientific knowledge, his debtors prospered and were able to repay his loans with money rather than with land. Grafton County entered into a new era of prosperity. And, with that modesty which had characterized his other life, Whidden let the local Granges take all the credit.

Dr. Cheney brought to him, usually secretly, many cases needing assistance. Joyce's keen insight into human nature enabled her to help her husband handle these cases fairly and not too liberally. One such case, early in the summer of 1890, was that of a very aged Chinese gentlemen, named Ling Lao, who had been studying philosophy at Harvard,

*(Continued on page 232)*

# ROBOT AL 76



**J**ONATHAN QUELL'S eyes crinkled worriedly behind their rimless glasses as he charged through the door labelled "General Manager."

He slapped the folded paper in his hands upon the desk and panted, "Look at that, boss!"

Sam Tobe juggled the cigar in his mouth from one cheek to the other, and looked. His hand went to his unshaven jaw and rasped along it. "Hell!" he exploded. "What are they talking about?"

"They say we sent out five AL robots," Quell explained, quite unnecessarily.

"We sent six," said Tobe.

"Sure, six! But they only got five at the other end. They sent out the serial numbers and AL 76 is missing."

Tobe's chair went over backwards as

he heaved his thick bulk upright and went through the door as if he were on greased wheels. It was five hours afterwards—with the plant pulled apart from assembly rooms to vacuum chambers; with every one of the plants two hundred employees put through the third-degree mills; that a sweating, disheveled Tobe sent an emergency message to the Central Plant at Schenectady.

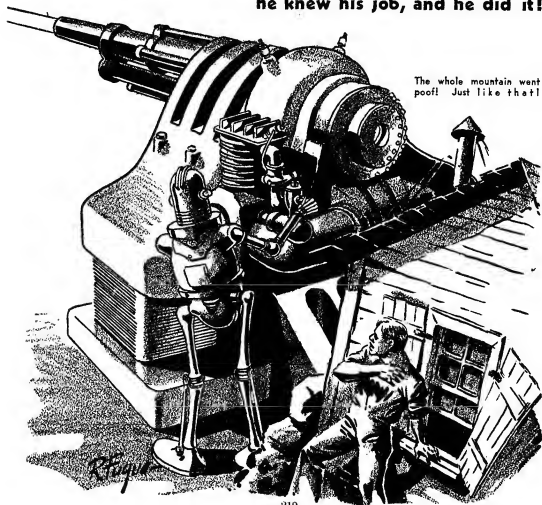
And at the Central Plant, a sudden explosion of near-panic took place. For the first time in the history of the United States Robot and Mechanical Men Corporation, a robot had escaped to the outer world. It wasn't so much that the law forbade the presence of any robot on Earth outside a licensed factory of the Corporation. Laws could always be squared. What was much more to the point was the statement made by one of the research mathematicians.

# GOES ASTRAY

by  
**ISAAC ASIMOV**

AL 76 was built for a specific  
job, but he got lost. However,  
he knew his job, and he did it!

The whole mountain went  
poof! Just like that!



He said: "That robot was created to run a Disinto on the Moon. Its positronic brain was equipped for a Lunar environment, and *only* a Lunar environment. On Earth here it's going to receive seventy-five umptyillion sense-impressions for which it was never prepared. There's no telling *what* its reactions will be. No telling!" And he wiped a forehead that had suddenly gone wet, with the back of his hand.

Within the hour, a stratosphere had left for the Virginia plant. The instructions were simple.

"Get that robot, and get it fast!"

AL 76 was confused! In fact, confusion was the only impression his delicate positronic brain retained. It had started when he had found himself in these strange surroundings. How it had come about, he no longer knew. Everything was mixed up.

There was green underfoot, and brown shafts rose all about him with more green on top. And the sky was blue where it should have been black. The sun was all right, round and yellow and hot—but where was the powdery pumice rock underfoot; where were the huge cliff-like crater rings?

There was only the green below and the blue above. The sounds that surrounded him were all strange. He had passed through running water that had reached his waist. It was blue and cold and wet. And when he passed people, as he did, occasionally, they were without the spacesuits they should have been wearing. When they saw him, they shouted and ran.

One man had leveled a gun at him and the bullet had whistled past his head—and then he had run, too.

He had no idea of how long he had been wandering before he finally stumbled upon Randolph Payne's shack two miles out in the woods from the

town of Hannaford. Randolph Payne himself, a screwdriver in one hand, a pipe in the other and a battered ruin of a vacuum-cleaner between his knees, squatted outside the doorway.

Payne was humming at the time, for he was a naturally happy-go-lucky soul—when at his shack. He had a more respectable dwelling place back in Hannaford, but *that* dwelling place was pretty largely occupied by his wife, a fact which he silently but sincerely regretted. Perhaps then, there was a sense of relief and freedom at such times when he found himself able to retire to his "special de-luxe doghouse" where he could smoke in peace and attend to his hobby of re-servicing household appliances.

It wasn't much of a hobby, but sometimes someone would bring out a radio or an alarm clock and the money he would get paid for juggling its insides was the only money he ever got that didn't pass in dribbles through his spouse's niggardly hands.

This vacuum cleaner, for instance, would bring in an easy six bits.

At the thought, he broke into song, raised his eyes, and broke into a sweat. The song choked off, the eyes popped, and the sweat became more intense. He tried to stand up—as a preliminary to running like hell—but he couldn't get his legs to co-operate.

And then AL 76 had squatted down next to him, and said, "Say, why did all the rest of them run?"

Payne knew damn well why they all ran, but the gurgle that issued from his diaphragm didn't show it. He tried to inch away from the robot.

AL 76 continued in an aggrieved tone, "One of them even took a shot at me. An inch to the left and he would have scratched my chest plates."

"M—must have b—been a nut," stammered Payne.



"That's possible." The robot's voice grew more confidential, "Listen, what's wrong with everything?"

PAYNE looked hurriedly about. It had struck him that the robot spoke in a remarkably mild tone for one so heavily and brutally metallic in appearance. It also struck him that he had heard somewhere that robots were mentally incapable of harming human beings. He relaxed a bit.

"There's nothing wrong with anything."

"Isn't there?" AL 76 eyed him accusingly. "*You're* all wrong. Where's your spacesuit?"

"I haven't got any."

"Then why aren't you dead?"

That stopped Payne, "Well,—I don't know."

"See!" said the robot, triumphantly, "there's something wrong with everything. Where's Mt. Copernicus? Where's Lunar Station 17? And where's my Disinto? I want to get to work, I do." He seemed perturbed, and his voice shook as he continued. "I've been going about for hours trying to get someone to tell me where my Disinto is, but they all run away. By now, I'm probably way behind schedule and the Sectional Executive will be as sore as blazes. This is a fine situation."

Slowly, Payne unscrambled the stew in which his brain found itself and said, "Listen, what do they call you?"

"My serial number is AL 76."

"All right. Al is good enough for me. Now, Al, if you're looking for Lunar Station 17, that's on the Moon. See?"

AL 76 nodded his head ponderously, "Sure. But I've been looking for it—"

"But it's on the Moon. This isn't the Moon."

It was the robot's turn to become confused. He watched Payne for a speculative moment and then said slowly,

"What do you mean this isn't the Moon? Of course it's the Moon. Because if it isn't the Moon, what is it? Huh? Answer me that."

Payne made a funny sound in his throat and breathed hard. He pointed a finger at the robot and shook it. "Look," he said,—and then the brilliant idea of the century struck him, and he finished with a strangled, "Wow!"

AL 76 eyed him censoriously, "That isn't an answer. I think I have a right to a civil answer if I ask a civil question."

Payne wasn't listening. He was still marvelling at himself. Why, it was as plain as day. This robot was one built for the Moon that had somehow gotten loose on Earth. Naturally it would be all mixed up, because its positronic brain had been geared exclusively for a lunar environment, making its Earthly surroundings entirely meaningless.

And now if he could only keep the robot here—until he could get in touch with the men at the factory in Petersboro. Why, robots were worth money. The cheapest cost \$50,000, he had once heard, and some of them ran into millions. Think of the reward!

Man, oh, man, *think of the reward!* And every cent for himself. Not as much as a quarter of a snifter of a plugged nickel for Mirandy. Jumpin' tootin' blazes, *no!*

He rose to his feet at last, "Al," he said. "You and I are buddies! Pals! I love you like a brother." He thrust out a hand, "Shake!"

THE robot swallowed up the offered hand in a metal paw and squeezed it gently. He didn't quite understand, "Does that mean you'll tell me how to get to Lunar Station 17?"

Payne was a trifle disconcerted, "N—no, not exactly. As a matter of fact, I like you so much, I want you to stay

here with me a while."

"Oh, no, I can't do that. I've got to get to work." He added gloomily, "How would you like to be falling behind your quota hour by hour and minute by minute? I want to work. I've got to work."

Payne thought sourly that there was no accounting for tastes, and said, "All right, then I'll explain something to you—because I can see from the looks of you that you're an intelligent person. I've had orders from your Sectional Executive, and he wants me to keep you here for a while. Till he sends for you, in fact."

"What for?" asked AL 76, suspiciously.

"I can't say. It's secret government stuff." Payne prayed inwardly and fervently, that the robot would swallow this. Some robots were damned clever, he knew, but this looked like one of the early models.

While he prayed, AL 76 considered. The robot's brain, adjusted to the handling of a Disinto on the Moon, was not at its best when engaged in abstract thought, but, just the same, ever since he had gotten lost, AL 76 had found his thought processes becoming stranger. The alien surroundings did something to him.

His next remark was almost shrewd. He said, slyly, "What's my Sectional Executive's name?"

Payne gulped and thought rapidly. "Al," he said, in a pained fashion, "you hurt me with this suspicion. I can't tell you his name. The trees have ears."

AL 76 inspected the tree next to him stolidly and said, "They have not."

"I know. What I mean is that spies are all around."

"Spies?"

"Yes. You know, *bad* people that want to destroy Lunar Station 17."

"What for?"

"Because they're *bad*. And they want to destroy *you*, and that's why you've got to stay here for a while, so they can't find you."

"But—but I've got to have a Disinto. I mustn't fall behind my quota."

"You will have. You will have." Payne promised earnestly, and just as earnestly damned the robot's one-track mind. "They're going to send one out tomorrow. Yeah, tomorrow." That would be plenty of time to get the men from the factory out here and collect beautiful green heaps of hundred dollar bills.

But AL 76 grew only the more stubborn under the distressing impingement of the strange world all about him upon his thinking mechanism.

"No," he said. "I've got to have a Disinto now." Stiffly, he straightened his joints, jerking erect. "I'd better look for it some more."

Payne swarmed after and grabbed a cold, hard elbow. "Listen," he squealed. "You've got to stay—"

And something in the robot's mind clicked. All the strangeness surrounding him collected itself into one globule, exploded, and left a brain ticking with a curiously increased efficiency. He whirled on Payne, "I tell you what. I can build a Disinto right here. —And then I can work it."

Payne paused doubtfully, "I don't think I can build one." He wondered if it would do any good to pretend he could.

"That's all right." AL 76 could almost feel the positronic paths of his brain weaving into a new pattern, and experienced a strange exhilaration, "I can build one." He looked into Payne's de-luxe doghouse, and said, "You've got all the material here that I need."

Randolph Payne surveyed the junk with which his shack was filled:

eviscerated radios, a topless refrigerator, rusty automobile engines, a broken-down gasrange, several miles of frayed wire, and, taking it all together, fifty tons or thereabouts of the most heterogeneous mass of old metal as ever caused a junkman to sniff disdainfully.

"Have I?" he said, weakly.

TWO hours later, two things happened practically simultaneously. The first was that Sam Tobe of the Petersboro branch of U.S. Robot & Mechanical Men, Inc. received a visiphone call from one Randolph Payne of Hannaford. It concerned the missing robot and Tobe, with a deep-throated snarl, broke connection half-way through, and ordered all subsequent calls to be re-routed to the sixth assistant vice-president in charge of button-holes.

This was not really unreasonable in Tobe. During the past week, although Robot AL 76 had dropped from sight completely, reports had flooded in from all over the Union as to the robot's whereabouts. As many as fourteen a day came—usually from fourteen different states.

Tobe was damn tired of it, to say nothing of being half-crazy just on general principles. There was even talk of a Congressional investigation, though every reputable Robotacist and Mathematical Physicist on Earth swore the robot was harmless.

In his state of mind, then, it is not surprising that it took three hours for the General Manager to pause and consider just exactly how it was that this Randolph Payne had known that the robot was slated for Lunar Station 17; and, for that matter, how he had known that the robot's serial number was AL 76. Those details had not been given out by the company.

He kept on considering for about a

minute and a half and then swung into action.

However, during the three hours between the call and the action, the second event took place. Randolph Payne, having correctly diagnosed the abrupt break in his call as being due to general skepticism on the part of the plant official returned to his shack with a camera. They couldn't very well argue with a photograph, and he'd be damned if he'd show them the real thing before they came across with the cash.

AL 76 was busy with affairs of his own. Half of the contents of Payne's shack was littered over about two acres of ground and in the middle of it, the robot squatted and fooled around with radio tubes, hunks of iron, copper wire, and general junk. He paid no attention to Payne, who, sprawling flat on his belly, focussed his camera for a beautiful shot.

And at this point it was that Lemuel Oliver Cooper turned the bend in the road and froze in his tracks as he took in the tableau. The reason for his coming in the first place was an ailing electric toaster that had developed the annoying habit of throwing out pieces of bread forcefully, but thoroughly untoasted. The reason for his *leaving* was more obvious. He had come with a slow, mildly cheerful, spring-morning saunter. He left with a speed that would have caused any college track coach to raise his eyebrows and purse his lips approvingly.

There was no appreciable slackening of speed, until Cooper hurtled into Sheriff Saunders' office minus hat and toaster and brought himself up hard against the wall.

KINDLY hands lifted him and for half a minute he tried speaking before he had actually calmed down to the point of breathing, with, of course,

no result.

They gave him whiskey, and fanned him, and when he did speak, it came out something like this: "—monster—seven feet tall—shack all busted up—poor Rannie Payne—" and so on.

They got the story out of him gradually: how there was a huge metal monster, seven feet tall, maybe even eight or nine, out at Randolph Payne's shack; how Randolph Payne himself was on his stomach, a "poor, bleeding, mangled corpse"; how the monster was then busily engaged in wrecking the shack out of sheer destructiveness; how it had turned on Lemuel Oliver Cooper, and how he—Cooper—had made his escape by half a hair.

Sheriff Saunders hitched his belt tighter about his portly middle and said, "It's that there machine man that got away from the Petersboro factory. We got warning on it last Saturday. —Hey, Jake, you get every man in Hannaford County that can shoot and slap a depitty's badge on him. Get them here at noon. And listen, Jake, before you do that, just drop in at the widder Payne's place and slip her the bad news gentle-like."

It is reported that Miranda Payne, having been acquainted with events, paused only to make sure that her "ex"-husband's insurance policy was safe, and to make a few pithy remarks concerning his danged foolishness in not taking out double what he had, before breaking out into as prolonged and heart-wringing a wail of grief as ever became a respectable widow.

IT WAS some hours later that Randolph Payne—unaware of his horrible mutilation and death—viewed the completed negatives of his snapshots with satisfaction. As a series of portraits of a robot at work, they left nothing to the imagination. They might

have been labelled: "Robot Gazing Thoughtfully at a Vacuum Tube," "Robot Splicing Two Wires," "Robot Wielding Screw-Driver," "Robot Taking Frigidaire apart with Great Violence" and so on.

As there now remained only the routine of making the prints themselves, he stepped out from beyond the curtain of the improvised dark-room for a bit of a smoke and a chat with AL 76.

In doing so, he was blissfully unaware that the neighboring woods were verminous with nervous farmers armed with anything from an old colonial relic of a blunderbuss to the portable machine-gun carried by the Sheriff himself. Nor, for that matter, had he any inkling of the fact that half a dozen roboticists, under the leadership of Sam Tobe, were smoking down the highway from Petersboro at better than a hundred and twenty miles an hour—for the sole purpose of having the pleasure and honor of his acquaintance.

So while things were jittering towards a climax, Randolph Payne sighed with self-satisfaction, lit a match upon the seat of his pants, puffed away at his pipe, and looked at AL 76 with amusement.

It had been apparent for quite some time that the robot was more than slightly lunatic. Randolph Payne was himself an expert at home-made contraptions; having built several that could not have been exposed to daylight without searing the eyeballs of all beholders;—but he had never even conceived of anything approaching the monstrosity that AL 76 was concocting.

It would have made the Rube Goldberg of his day die in convulsions of envy. It would have made Picasso quit art in the sheer knowledge that he had been hopelessly surpassed. It would have soured the milk in the udders of any cow within half a mile of it.

In fact, it was gruesome!

From a rusty and massive iron base that faintly resembled something Payne had once seen attached to a second-hand tractor, it rose upward in rakish, drunken swerves, through a bewildering mess of wires, wheels, tubes, and nameless horrors without number, ending in a megaphone arrangement that looked decidedly sinister.

Payne had the impulse to peek in the megaphone part, but refrained. He had seen far more sensible machines explode suddenly and with violence.

He said, "Hey, Al."

The robot looked up. He had been lying flat on his stomach, teasing a thin sliver of metal into place. "What do you want, Payne?"

"What is this?" He asked it in the tone of one referring to something foul and decomposing, held gingerly between two ten-foot poles.

"It's the Disinto I'm making—so I can start to work. It's an improvement on the standard model." The robot rose, dusted his knees clankingly, and looked at it proudly.

Payne shuddered. An "improvement"! No wonder they hid the original in caverns on the Moon. Poor satellite! Poor dead satellite! He had always wanted to know what a fate worse than death was. Now he knew.

"Will it work?" he asked.

"Sure."

"How do you know?"

"It's got to. I made it, didn't I? I only need one thing now. Got a flashlight?"

"Somewheres, I guess." Payne vanished into the shack and returned almost immediately.

The robot unscrewed the bottom and set to work. In five minutes, he had finished, stepped back, and said, "All set. Now I get to work. You may watch if you want to."

A pause, while Payne tried to appreciate the magnanimity of the offer. "Is it safe?"

"A baby could handle it."

"Oh!" Payne grinned weakly and got behind the thickest tree in the vicinity. "Go ahead," he said, "I have the utmost confidence in you."

Al 76 pointed to the nightmarish junkpile and said, "Watch!" His hands set to work—

THE embattled farmers of Hannaford County, Virginia, weaved up upon Payne's shack in a slowly tightening circle. With the blood of their heroic colonial forebears pounding in their veins—and goose-flesh trickling up and down their spines—they crept from tree to tree.

Sheriff Saunders spread the word, "Fire when I give the signal—and aim at the eyes."

Jacob Linker—Lank Jake, to his friends, and Sheriff's Deputy to himself—edged close, "Ya think mebbe this machine man has skedaddled." He did not quite manage to suppress the tone of wistful hopefulness in his voice.

"Dunno," grunted the sheriff. "Guess not, though. We woulda come across him in the woods if he had, and we haven't."

"But it's awful quiet, and it 'pears to me as if we're gettin' close to Payne's place."

The remainder wasn't necessary. Sheriff Saunders had a lump in his throat so big it had to be swallowed in three installments. "Get back," he ordered, "and keep your finger on the trigger."

They were at the rim of the clearing now, and Sheriff Saunders closed his eyes and stuck the corner of one out from behind the tree. Seeing nothing, he paused, then tried again, eyes open this time.

Results were, naturally, better.

To be exact, he saw one huge machine man, back towards him, bending over one soul-curdling, hiccupy contraption of uncertain origin and less certain purpose. The only item he missed was the quivering figure of Randolph Payne, embracing the tree next but three to the nor'-nor'-west.

Sheriff Saunders stepped out into the open and raised his machine-gun. The robot, still presenting a broad metal back, said in a loud voice—to person or persons unknown—"Watch!" and as the Sheriff opened his mouth to ki-yi a general order to fire—metal fingers compressed a switch.

THERE exists no adequate description of what occurred afterwards, in spite of the presence of seventy eyewitnesses. In the days, months, and years to come not one of those seventy ever had a word to say about the few seconds after the Sheriff had opened his mouth to give the firing order. When questioned about it, they merely turned apple-green and staggered away.

It is plain, however, that, in a general way, what did occur was this.

Sheriff Saunders opened his mouth; Al 76 pulled a switch; the Disinto worked—and seventy-five trees, two barns, three cows and the top three-quarters of Duckbill Mountain whiffed into rarefied atmosphere. They became, so to speak, one with the snows of yesteryear.

Sheriff Saunders' mouth remained open for an indefinite interval thereafter, but nothing—neither firing orders nor anything else—issued therefrom. And then—

And then, there was a stirring in the air, a multiple ro-o-o-o-oshing sound, a series of purple streaks through the atmosphere radiating away from Randolph Payne's shack as the center—and

of the members of the posse, not a sign.

There were various guns scattered about the vicinity, including the Sheriff's patented nickel-plated, extra-rapid-fire, guaranteed-no-clog, portable machine gun. There were about fifty hats, a few half-chomped cigars, and some odds and ends that had come loose in the excitement—but of actual human beings there were none.

Except for Lank Jake, not one of those human beings came within human ken for three days, and the exception in his favor came about because he was interrupted in his comet-flight by the half-dozen men from the Petersboro factory, who were charging *into* the wood at a pretty fair speed of their own.

It was Sam Tobe that stopped him, catching Lank Jake's head skillfully in the pit of his stomach. When he caught his breath, Tobe asked, "Where's Randolph Payne's place?"

Lank Jake allowed his eyes to unglaze for just a moment. "Brother," he said, "just you follow the direction I ain't going."

And with that, miraculously, he was gone. There was a shrinking dot, dodging trees on the horizon, that might have been him, but Sam Tobe wouldn't have sworn to it.

THAT takes care of the posse; but there still remains Randolph Payne, whose reactions took something of a different form.

For Randolph Payne, the five-second interval after the pulling of the switch and the disappearance of Duckbill Mountain was a total blank. At the start he had been peering through the thick underbrush from behind the bottom of the trees; at the end, he was swinging wildly from one of the top-most branches. The same impulse that had driven the posse horizontally, had driven him vertically.

As to how he had covered the hundred fifty feet from roots to top—whether he had climbed, jumped, or flown, he did not know—and he didn't give a particle of a damn.

What he *did* know was that property had been destroyed by a robot temporarily in his possession. All visions of rewards vanished and were replaced by trembling nightmares of hostile citizenry, shrieking lynch mobs, lawsuits, murder charges, and what Mirandy Payne would say.—Mostly what Mirandy Payne would say.

He was yelling wildly and hoarsely, "Hey, you robot, you smash that thing, do you hear? Smash it good! You forget I ever had anything to do with it. You're a stranger to me, see? You don't ever say a word about it. Forget it, you hear?"

He didn't expect his orders to do any good; it was only reflex action. What he didn't know was that a robot always obeyed a human order except where carrying it out involved danger to another human.

Al 76, therefore calmly and methodically, proceeded to demolish his Disinto into rubble and flinders.

Just as he was stamping the last cubic inch under foot, Sam Tobe and his contingent arrived, and Randolph Payne, sensing that the real owners of the robot had come, dropped out of the tree head-first and made for regions unknown feet-first.

He did not wait for his reward.

AUSTIN WILDE, Robotical Engineer, turned to Sam Tobe and said, "Did you get anything out of the robot?"

Tobe shook his head and snarled deep in his throat, "Nothing. Not a damn thing. He's forgotten everything that's happened since he left the factory. He must have gotten *orders* to forget, or it

couldn't have left him so blank.—What was that pile of junk he'd been fooling with?"

"Just that. A pile of junk.—But it must have been a Disinto before he smashed it, and I'd like to kill the fellow who ordered him to do that, by slow torture. Look at this!"

They were part of the way up the slopes of what had been Duckbill Mountain—at that point, to be exact, where the top had been sheered off; and Wilde put his hand down upon the perfect flatness that cut through both soil and rock.

"*What* a Disinto," he said. "It took the mountain right off its base."

"What made him build it?"

Wilde shrugged, "I don't know. Some factor in his environment—there's no way of knowing what—reacted upon his Moon-type positronic brain to produce a Disinto out of junk. It's a million to one against our ever stumbling upon that factor again now that the robot himself has forgotten. We'll never have that Disinto."

"Never mind. The important thing is that we have the robot."

"The hell you say." There was poignant regret in his voice. "Have you ever had anything to do with the Disintos on the Moon. They eat up energy like so many electronic hogs and won't even begin to run till you've built up a potential of better than a million volts.—But *this* Disinto worked differently. I went through the rubbish with a microscope, and would you like to see the only source of power of any kind that I found?"

"What was it?"

"Just this!—And we'll never know how he did it."

And Justin Wilde held up the source of power that had enabled a Disinto to chew up a mountain in half a second—*two flashlight batteries!*

# Scientific

**J**UST OVER 75 YEARS AGO, THE FRENCH NATURALIST, MOUHOT, STUMBLED ON THE MAGNIFICENT RUINS OF ANGKOR VAT IN THE CAMBODIAN JUNGLES OF INDO-CHINA.



**S**EALAND, A NATION WHICH CONQUERED MIGHTY ASSYRIA, HAS NEVER BEEN FOUND, BUT DOUGHERTY PROVED ITS EXISTENCE.



**E**ASTER ISLAND AND ITS HUGE STONE IMAGES IS MUTE EVIDENCE OF ANOTHER GREAT CIVILIZATION OF THE DIM AND MYSTERIOUS PAST.



# Mysteries

## VANISHED CIVILIZATIONS

By JOSEPH J. MILLARD

**Today bombers are flying over the jungles that hide  
the ruins of the most mysterious cities on Earth . . .**

**J**UST a little over seventy-five years ago, a French naturalist named Mouhot set out to search the untrodden jungles of Cambodia in Indo-China for specimens of tropical life. For days and weeks he fought his weary way through forests of banyan and bamboo. As far as he knew, he was the first European to penetrate this unknown land, the first with any reason to brave the unknown and uncharted jungles beyond Npompenn. And little Mouhot, the naturalist, was no hard-bitten explorer and adventurer, no gold-seeker. All he asked of this forbidding jungle was a few little bugs and butterflies for his collection. Instead, or besides, he startled the world by bringing back one of the weirdest unsolved mysteries of all time.

One evening, after endless days of monotonous jungle, he hacked through a last wall of root and creeper and green trunk and burst out into a fantastic dream world. Before him was the most magnificent city his eyes had ever beheld, a vision straight from the Arabian Nights. Here was no ancient ruin, relic of an almost forgotten past, but a perfectly preserved capitol of an unknown civilization.

Before him stood a vast temple, surrounded by a moat and a wall, with a mammoth step pyramid in its center, from which rose five richly carved towers. Close by, near the shore of the *Tonle Sap*, or Great Lake, stood an amazing walled city, richer and vaster than Rome or Carthage or even the Athens of Pericles.

Most unbelievable to Mouhot, and to every visitor since, was the fact that both city and temple were intact. These were not ruins but the living heart of a mighty empire. Mouhot looked around him cautiously, expecting to see strange priests, smoking altar fires, the commerce and activity of a mighty metropolis. There was, and still is, about Angkor Vat and Angkor Thom the very vivid impression that the people who dwell there have only stepped out for a short time, that they will return to their homes and temples almost immediately.

But no one did return and after a time, the wondering Mouhot returned to civilization to tell

a story that branded him as the world's prize liar for years to come. What, a temple greater and more majestic than anything Greece or Rome could offer? A city vaster and richer than even those of modern Europe, completely abandoned to the eternal jungles? The story was insane.

Eventually, scientists fought their way through to Mouhot's fantastic mystery land and confirmed his stories. Angkor Vat, or the chief temple, and Angkor Thom, or grand capital, took their places well toward the head of the world's mysteries of vanished civilizations. Today fine automobile roads carry thousands of tourists from Saigon to Angkor in a few hours. Science has read the inscriptions on the walls and columns has recreated much of the splendor of the Khmers who built temple and city, has even located early historical reference to the mighty empire.

But not even today does science have the faintest idea of what became of one of the mightiest civilizations that ever ruled on this earth.

**S**INCE Mouhot's fantastic discovery, other great cities have been found along the tributaries of the Mekong River, evidences of a widespread commerce and culture. Science believes that the population of this mysterious race totalled at least thirty million and perhaps more. Angkor Thom, the city, was the finest metropolis in Asia, a city of tremendous wealth and culture, every bit as fantastically rich as ancient Babylon. Not since the Tower of Babel has the hand of man ever attempted anything as grandiose as the temple of Angkor Vat.

It is known that the mysterious Khmers were either Hindus or ardent followers of Hindu culture. Ancient Chinese records mention a Hindu civilization in Indo-China flourishing in 238 A.D. Much earlier, a Chinese traveler named Tchcou-Ta-Quan wrote what was believed to be a fictional account of his adventures in a great kingdom in the Mekong Valley. Beyond those meager mentions, the world seems to have known little of a civilization actually finer and richer than any other in existence at that time. The last trace of Khmer civilization disappears from history as late as the

fourteenth century.

Unlike most abandoned cities, science did not have to dig too deeply to unravel the language. The inscriptions were found to be in an alphabet allied to Sanskrit and amenable to comparatively easy deciphering.

From then science learned that Yacovarman, the King of Glory, who ruled the Khmers from 889 to 908 A.D. built the city and actually moved into it within ten years after it was started. The walls of Angkor Thom measure nearly two miles to a side and enclose, besides the city itself, another temple almost as vast as Angkor Vat itself, a mile to the south.

The temple of Angkor Vat is surrounded by a moat nearly seven hundred feet wide and three miles around. The temple itself occupies about a quarter of a mile square within a high wall. The lower galleries measure two hundred and fifty feet to a side and the facade is five times the width of famed Notre Dame in Paris.

As an example of the masterly craft of its mystery builders, the architecture of Angkor Vat shows uncanny perspective. No one has yet been able to accurately judge its height. Tricks of perspective make its high towers look still higher. As a whole, the temple is more majestic and artistic than Egypt's pyramids or even the famed Taj Mahal.

Yet all its physical mysteries and wonders pale before the greater wonder of what became of its builders. How could a race and a culture equal to any at that time completely vanish from sight without so much as a ripple on the current of history to mark their passing?

The Khmers were obviously not wiped out by wars or floods or pestilence, as many first guessed. There have not as yet been found any human remains. The hand of a destroying conqueror has apparently never been laid on the mighty temple and city.

As far as anyone has ever been able to see, thirty million of the most highly cultured and civilized people on the face of the earth simply walked out of their homes and temples and straight off the face of the earth forever. Where did they go? No one knows. No one can even hazard a sound guess.

**I**N EVERY major police department today, there is a unit known as the Bureau of Missing Persons. The job of this Bureau is to find people who vanish from the sight of friends and relatives. Such Bureaus, highly specialized in their work, have been successful in locating thousands of missing persons.

Science is literally crying for some such Bureau of Missing Civilizations that will be only one-tenth as successful in finding vanished peoples who have somehow lost themselves from the world. To catalog all the vanished races known to mankind would require many volumes.

A classic example that has intrigued anthropologists and theologians as well for centuries is the

mystery of the Lost Tribes of Israel.

The Bible, which is an historical authority beyond compare, gives us an excellent account of early Jewish history and of the Twelve Tribes that made up the Hebrew nation. The wanderings and struggles of these Twelve Tribes are followed with meticulous detail. On the death of Solomon, in 975 B.C., ten of the Twelve Tribes revolted against Solomon's son and successor, Rehoboam, and formed the separate kingdom of Israel with its capital at Samaria. At the same time, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin became the kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Following the Babylonian captivity, Cyrus the Great of Persia issued an edict permitting the Jews to return to their homeland of Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. Some fifty thousand of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin did return and completed the reconstruction of the temple in 515 B.C. At this time, the Bible and all contemporary history completely drops any mention of the other Ten Tribes. To this day, no one knows for sure what became of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Like the Khmers, they simply walked out of history and off the face of the earth.

Perhaps tied up with this mystery is a newer one, barely exposed by the diligence of the late Professor Raymond Dougherty of Yale University. Through his researches into ancient writings and inscriptions, a whole lost civilization has been discovered but not found. This land, called Sealand, is believed to have been somewhere in Arabia. Reference to Sealand in the inscriptions found in many Assyrian and Babylonian ruins show that it was a mighty nation, strong enough to face and whip mighty Assyria and to even intrude in the politics of Babylonia and Chaldea.

Yet, until Professor Dougherty began his researches, no one knew that Sealand existed. Today, archaeologists know a great deal about Sealand from the writings of its rivals. . . .

. . . except where Sealand was and what became of its civilization.

**S**CIENCE is still puzzled over discoveries of the graves of an unknown race in Siberia. One of the customs of this mysterious people was that of making accurate death masks of plaster, recording the complete facial details of their dead. From these, archaeologists had no trouble in reproducing images of a beak-nosed, long-faced race with blonde or brown hair. But who these mystery peoples were, where they came from or where they vanished to, are questions no scientist dares even guess at answers for.

Right here in America, the Bureau of Missing Civilizations would find tasks waiting for its research. Early Spanish narratives, as well as others, mention a race of highly-cultured and intelligent Indians known as Yuchis. Science has found plenty of mention of this race—but not one single trace of their existence. No homes, graves, implements or weapons have ever been found that could definitely be labelled Yuchi. Yet archaeology is

fairly certain the mysterious and intelligent Yuchi Indians did inhabit our southern country.

Further back, science is trying to find more information about a sensational and mysterious race that inhabited North America some 15,000 years ago. Until recently, the idea of such an Ice-Age race was considered sheer fantasy. Then researchers found unmistakable evidence of a race that existed at the same time as the mammoth, the American camel, the ancient bison and prehistoric horses. Today, there is no doubt that an intelligent and cultured race existed in that dim dawn of time but that only enhances the mystery.

If such a race existed, they must have gotten their culture from an even earlier race for the finds show similar stone weapons scattered from one end of the country to the other. Furthermore, they must have vanished somewhere, for there is a gap in history that is apparently not bridged by the earlier culture. Perhaps the mysterious Never-never land of lost civilizations laid claim to them, as well.

Many people, including some prominent archaeologists and anthropologists, class the Inca, Chimu, Aztec and Maya civilizations, with the attendant Toltec, Mixtec and Zapotec cultures, as that of vanished civilizations. While a majority of scientists prefer to trace these incredible civilizations through to a logical end in the arrival of conquering Europeans, the theory has flaws. A great many refuse to believe that a civilization as vast and as high in scientific knowledge as that of the Incas, for example, could be completely obliterated by a little band of invading Spaniards. Or that the mighty civilization of the Maya, or True Man, could have simply wasted away to the dull-eyed, slow-brained savages who claim descendency from the ancient spendour.

To many, the culture of Inca, Aztec and Maya still exist, greater and grander than ever, in the unexplored fastnesses of Central and South America. And if only one-tenth of the fantastic tales of hidden civilizations that constantly appear are true then some great culture does still exist, hidden from the eyes of a civilization that would spell its downfall.

**A**NOTHER, and equally mystifying disappearance of a cultured civilization took place in the south Pacific. When white men first discovered lonely Easter Island or Rapa Nui, to give it its native name, they found there immense and mysterious stone idols by the hundreds. These were unquestionably the product of an intelligence and a culture unknown anywhere else on earth. Besides, they were created and transported in some manner that remains a mystery to this day.

But greater even than the idols was the mystery of a written language. First explorers to touch

Easter Island found numbers of manuscripts and carved inscriptions in a strange and wholly undecipherable tongue. They were, and still are, the only known traces of written language known to the South Seas. No one to this day has succeeded in deciphering the inscriptions nor in suggesting who the unknown writers might have been.

The modern inhabitants of Easter Island are the lowest of primitive savages, with no culture and no racial memories. They have no memories, no legends of those earlier inhabitants who used a written language and carved the mighty idols. Science thinks the modern Easter Islanders are comparatively recent arrivals on the bleak island, not even related to those earlier inhabitants who literally walked off the earth. For that matter, the whole hodge-podge of races throughout the South Seas is a puzzle no anthropologist has been able to solve.

Perhaps the best, even if most fantastic theory, is that Easter Island was the last outpost of that fabulous continent of Mu or Gondwana that, like Atlantis, was supposed to have been swallowed by the sea. Certainly no one has ever been able to find the cradle of strange cultures that crop up so surprisingly among the thousands of tiny islands of Oceania.

These are by no means all the vanished races known to mankind. The prehistoric Neanderthal man over-ran Europe and then utterly vanished, to give way to a race of homo sapiens in no way similar. It seems incredible that they could have been completely annihilated. Perhaps they, too, joined the lost races of the world in some undiscovered haven beyond the reach of inquisitive science.

It is a fascinating subject, one that draws the interest of thousands, and one that may never be solved. For the deeper researchers go into the history of lost civilizations, the more they turn up new, fresh mysteries without solution. The lost builders of mighty Stonehenge, the mystery tribes who built almost identical duplicates of Stonehenge altars on South Sea Islands, the unknown builders of the Great Pyramid, a score of others. All history is a perplexing parade of mighty empires, cultured races, vast civilizations that have walked away from their homes and their temples. Where have they gone? Why did they leave?

There are a hundred incredible, fantastic guesses. But none is more fantastic than the fact itself—that millions of civilized, educated people could walk away into nowhere, into a mysterious land of Never-Return, and vanish forever from the sight of mankind.

Who will be the next to make that Mysterious Journey?

THE END

## COMING NEXT MONTH

Maybe you think it isn't true, that it's still a "Scientific Mystery," but sea serpents *do* exist. Joseph J. Millard presents some startling facts in our next issue. We present them as a mystery, but you draw your own conclusions! Don't miss the next in this fascinating series.

## THE IMMORTALITY OF ALAN WHIDDEN

*(Continued from page 217)*

and was spending the summer at Squam Lake before returning to his own country. He had become acquainted with the genial Dr. Cheney, and they had developed a warm friendship. When Ling Lao's funds were stolen, thus leaving him completely stranded, Dr. Cheney vouched for him to Alan Whidden, and the latter made good the loss. This was but a sample of his benefices. Ling Lao stayed on, and became a warm friend of the Whiddens.

A CHILD was now expected in the Whidden family. Dr. Cheney became worried. The bright flame of Joyce Whidden began to flicker.

Frantic, her husband brought into play all that he knew of biology and medicine. Dr. Cheney marveled at this knowledge, but kept his peace.

Early on the morning of August 6, 1890, their son was born. And Joyce still lived.

That afternoon, when both she and the child were resting quietly, Alan Whidden dropped over to his Cousin Nate's store to receive the congratulations of his friends.

"Funny thing," Nate remarked. "There was a man in here jest a few minutes back, that war the spittin' image of you, Squire. Says his name's Jones—Bill Jones—and that he's a hired man over to Shepard Hill."

Alan Whidden stiffened as though shot, and clapped his hand to his side. Throughout the past year of paradise with Joyce, he had almost forgotten who he really was, or at least had kept the knowledge below the threshold of his consciousness. He had truly entered into the life of Squire Whidden, and had become that individual in his own

mind. Now the fact was borne in on him that, after all, he did not belong in this era; that he was really Alan Whidden II, born in 1909, nineteen years away in the future, that he was the same person who, afflicted with an incurable malady, had stood before the painting of "Prometheus Bound," and had marveled at the Titan's fortitude, his liver torn by the bird of prey.

Alan's face now ashen, he left the store and headed across the bridge and up the wood-road to the right. Gaining the heights of Sherwood Hill he stared across the wild meadows to the southwest. Yes, there rested a cigar-shaped metal object gleaming in the afternoon sun, his own space-ship, the one which he had sent back through time a year ago.

Chastened, thoughtful, filled with foreboding, he trudged home.

Joyce and the baby were doing well, so Dr. Cheney reported. This report reassured him somewhat.

That evening, while the doctor and the nurse were attending to the baby in Joyce's room, Alan Whidden stole to a darkened window on the same side of the house. Yes, there stood a man in overalls his face illumined by the light from Joyce's window, peering in.

Himself of a year ago! No, that was not it. Rather himself of today, before going back in time to a year ago to kill the man who now peered out. No, that was not it either, for it was he himself who had done the killing, and the dead man now lay dead and buried in the cellar of this very house for all of the past year.

Then there were three of them? What had become of the third? His mind reeled. He passed a handkerchief across his perspiring brow.

Why not settle the whole question here and now, by dashing out of the house, and confronting the masquer-

ader who lurked outside?

"ALAN!" It was Dr. Cheney's voice. For several months now, the doctor had been addressing him by this more affectionate term and other neighbors had gradually begun to drop the more formal word, "Squire."

Whidden stepped out into the hall, and joined the doctor, whose face was drawn and solemn.

"Alan, come in here."

Together they entered Joyce's bedroom.

One look at his beloved wife, and Whidden knew the worst.

"Why didn't we think of an oxygen tent?" he groaned.

Whidden's skill as a biologist confirmed the ominous look in Dr. Cheney's kind old eyes that it was now too late for even that biological skill to do anything. And suddenly Whidden remembered, what some defense mechanism had kept from him all this beautiful year with Joyce, that his father's mother had died in childbirth.

Dropping to his knees beside the bed, he clasped one cold hand in his two warm ones and pled,

"Don't leave me, Joyce. Please don't, dear."

For a brief moment the fire of love filled her yellow-green eyes, with a final flare. Then it subsided.

"Alan," she breathed, "I have been very happy with you. But what is written, is written."

Her hand went limp, and her glorious tawny head slumped on the pillow.

Alan Whidden bowed his head forward against the side of the bed and wept. Yet through his grief there ran the banal thought: What had caused Joyce to speak those last words? What could she know of the curious tangle of time in which he and she had become enmeshed?

Gently Dr. Cheney raised Whidden to his feet, placed one strong arm across his sagging shoulders, and led him from the room of death.

A sudden sharp physical pain gripped Whidden's side, and he stiffened spasmodically. Dr. Cheney wheeled him around, and stared at him searchingly.

"How long has this been going on?" the doctor asked.

Whidden shook his head.

"Nothing matters now," he replied.

Dr. Cheney gave him an opiate and put him to bed.

A few days later, Joyce was buried, but Alan Whidden hardly knew nor cared. Gradually, tactfully, Dr. Cheney wormed out of him an account of his symptoms, and with equal tact and gradualness brought his thoughts around to his duty to the little son for whose life Joyce had sacrificed her own.

"Can you stand a blow, if I talk frankly?" the kind old physician asked.

"That I have cancer?" Whidden laughed grimly. "I knew it already before I came here. And nothing can be done about it. I can't even die."

"So-o-o!" the doctor whistled. "Then Ling Lao was right."

"So it was he who taught my little Joyce the line about what is written, is written," Whidden bitterly declared, but with growing interest. Then suddenly, "What else was the wise old Chinese philosopher right about?"

"That you are William Jones, who twice visited Holderness: first in 1890; and later in 1889, to stay."

Whidden laughed again—not quite so grimly this time.

"It's hard to keep any secrets from you two."

THAT evening Cheney, Whidden and Ling Lao conferred in Whidden's study. The elderly Chinese philosopher  
(Concluded on page 235)

# A CITY ON GANYMEDE

(Moon of Jupiter)

By HENRY GADE

**Gatos, crater city of Ganymede, is a city of magnetic wizardry, its cat-people being masters of static electrical science as a power source**

TO THE first inhabitant of Ganymede, staring up with primitive wonder at the tremendous "moon" that fills most of the sky, the mother world Jupiter must have presented an awesome and fearful spectacle. Especially the famed "red spot" which must have glared down on him like a baleful eye.

But to the Ganymedan who built the city of Gatos, it was nothing fearful or supernatural; even though it was still an object of his worship. But the reason for his respect was not superstition, it was because the red spot of Jupiter had become his life, his science, and his civilization.

The city of Gatos, on Ganymede is a city powered by magnetic electricity, static electricity, pouring down upon the planet from the intensely radio-active ores of the red spot. And the man of Ganymede is a master of magnetic electricity, of its capture, storing, and use in running his city.

Ganymede is a small-world, much smaller than Earth, and smaller than our moon. But due to its proximity to Jupiter, gravitational stresses tear constantly at its vitals, and it is consequently a volcanic, earthquake-ridden world.

However, there exist many ancient, dead craters, and it is in one of these that the city of Gatos is built. The main city down in the crater, and the dwellings of more important Ganymedans scattered about the rim and the slopes beyond.

As we enter Gatos we are amazed to discover that most of the people we see are females, and what females! They are gorgeous felines, beautifully covered with silken fur of a brilliant yellow and orange color. And they ride atop the backs of giant lizards of a brilliant green. They present a spectacular spectacle of swiftly flashing movement and color.

The males of Gatos are not the masters. They are the slaves. Women rule the planet. And under their dominance, the city of Gatos is a place of feline cleanliness and feline domesticity.

It is only when we look up from the homes to the magnetic electricity power towers that we discover that these women are also the scientists of the world; for they tend them with the same feminine meticulousness as their comfortable

homes. These towers are worth a scrutiny.

They rear up over the city and the crater like super Eiffel towers, tapering to a point at the top—a point crowned by a huge disc that is made of a radio-active ore with a high selenium content. This selenium cap absorbs the rays from the red spot, conducts them down by means of heavy cables into giant condensers which pour concentrated power into great batteries erected in solid basalt craters far below the city proper.

These natural batteries then become the powerhouse of the city, and all industry is run by them. An estimated ten million kilowatt hours is the capacity of the batteries beneath a city, and they can be fully charged in one revolution of Ganymede on its axis.

Being the only inhabitants of Ganymede, beyond the lizards and various minor insects, the cat-people are not ferocious, even though they do present the appearance of man-eating tigers with human characteristics. However, they are suspicious with the natural suspicion of the feline, and curious enough to be unable to retain that suspicion for any length of time. The result is an initial independence upon the entrance of a stranger, and then a curiosity that results in a rather trying period of investigation before interest again dies.

Visitors are rare on Ganymede, and Gatos is one of the cities of the solar system about which a great deal is not generally known by the average person. Its popularity is further reduced by the unhappy independence of the cat-women.

The only evidence of cat-savagery is the stories that persist of male Gatonians being disemboweled in strange rites by their mates. However, this has not been definitely proven, and probably never will. No human being is ever allowed inside the crater city itself, nor into the mysterious galleries that are said to extend for miles into the depths.

It is certain that the industries of Gatos are limited to production of its own necessities only. There is no trade with other planets.

Like all females, the cat-women city of Gatos, on Ganymede, is the mystery city of the solar system!

## THE IMMORTALITY OF ALAN WHIDDEN

(Concluded from page 233)

losopher was about to return to his native land. High in the mountains of Western China, so he informed his two friends, there was a pleasant valley where all ills could be cured in time.

"And you have an unlimited supply of *that* medicine, Alan Whidden," he concluded.

"Your malady is so advanced that it will soon become unbearable, if you stay on here," Dr. Cheney added.

So, although torn by the thought of parting with all that was left of his Joyce, namely the little child who was

both his son *now*, and his father *to be*, Alan Whidden accepted Ling Lao's invitation.

He placed all his wealth in trust for the boy, naming Dr. Cheney as guardian. Then, without saying goodbye to any of his many friends — for they would not understand, and he could never satisfactorily explain to them—he kissed his infant son goodbye, and was driven to Ashland by Dr. Cheney.

There he warmly clasped the hand of this true friend, and took the train to Boston, en route to the Orient and beyond with Ling Lao.

Thus Alan Whidden deserted his infant son. What was written, was written. The cycle of time was complete.

THE END

# DISCUSSIONS



AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

## DECEMBER ISSUE

Sirs:

The December issue was too good to say nothing about. All the stories were good. It's hard to rate them, but here they are:

1. The Secret Of Planetoid 88.
2. The Man Who Wasn't Himself.
3. The Odds On Sergeant Shane.
4. Planet Of Lost Men.
5. Rayhouse In Space.
6. Bandits Of Time.

That Cartoon in the Observatory—was that done by *the Magarian*?

LIONEL BATTY, JR.,  
1485 N. Morningside Dr. N. E.  
Atlanta, Ga.

Yes, *Magarian* did the cartoon.—Ed.

## "DEATH" CRAFT?

Sirs:

Cabot's second Sergeant Shane short was better than the first, but the "lifecraft" race was absolutely silly. The race course was two miles long, and although the time was not given, I'd estimate

that it was about two minutes—a mile a minute—and that's being generous, considering the breathtaking descriptions of one craft inching ahead two yards, etc.

Lifecrafts with such a low speed would be entirely worthless. If a space cruiser crashed, say 48 million miles from Earth, it would take the survivors almost *six years* to reach safety. In such tiny ships there would be no room for provisions, and almost any distance in the awesome depths of space would be too far.

In a race of two miles, speedy-enough lifecraft would travel so swiftly that the contest would be over in a reasonable facsimile of an eyewink. Or infinitely quicker.

D. W. BOCOS,  
2215 Benjamin St., N. E.  
Minneapolis, Minn.

*If a lifecraft has the power to accelerate from a dead stop to a mile a minute, that would mean that in two minutes you travel two times as fast, or two miles a minutes, and so on. Add to this the growing mileage covered with each minute, and you discover that in a few*

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hours, you will want to slow down, or overshoot your mark. Because top acceleration of the lifecraft was one mile per minute, or hour, or day, doesn't mean its top speed is one mile. It would increase at a growing rate that will astound you if you sit down to figure it out. All in all, we don't think the lifecraft race was a bit silly.—Ed.

## REPP'S STORY BEST

Sirs:

The December issue was swell compared to the November issue. The Secret of Planetoid 88 was the best story since "Black World." Planet Of Lost Men came out second. I was disappointed in Bandits Of Time. It was readable, though. The rest of the stories were about even. What happened to Magarian and Krupa? Are they dead? They are the best artists on your staff.

THOMAS REGAN, JR.,  
138 Townsend St.,  
New Brunswick, N. J.

Magarian certainly hasn't deserted us, and Krupa isn't dead. He's working on at least one illustration. We hope he'll finish it.—Ed.

## NO INSULT INTENDED

Sirs:

Quote: "Smith's appeal lies in the amount of thought his stories make necessary, whereas Wilcox is effortless reading. He fascinates, and Smith confounds." End quote.

Was that supposed to be an insult to Smith? Probably. And a compliment to Wilcox? I wonder.

Quote: "those old 'Classics . . . are distinct flops." End quote.

In general, undoubtedly. But in particular there are certain authors, now deceased, who had something that will never be duplicated again. Merritt, Hall,—yes, and E. E. Smith. Is he a flop? If so, why do mags with his stories in them always sell out completely. No, I realize you won't answer this, but I was just wondering . . .

The second large issue looks promising. It ought to be, with Harry Bates, Don Wilcox, Al Bester, Finlay, and "The Chlorophyll Girl" in the same covers. How do you stand the expense of these "specials" anyway?

PAUL CARTER,  
156 S. University Street,  
Blackfoot, Idaho.

Certainly we mean no insult to either Smith or Wilcox. We are sorry that you interpreted our comment so. We merely strove to make clear the difference we see in the work of these two men. One writes simply, the other complicatedly. Actually, neither can be compared. They are worlds apart.

Once, Amazing Stories ran reprints of classics, and nearly collapsed. It was soon offered for sale, whereupon we bought it and revived it with new material. So we regard reprint policy with justified suspicion.



Never having run Smith, we can't tell whether he sells an issue completely or not. We do know, however, that Wilcox does. And all of our other authors help—credit all around.—Ed.

### A FANMAG EDITOR SPEAKS

Sirs:

I have come to the bright conclusion that you don't think much of fan magazines or fans in general. . . . However it seems to me that even though the "few dozen fans" that you speak of do dislike the type of stories you print, you have no right to make such remarks. You must not overlook the fact that the fans of science fiction are by far the most active of any pulp magazine printed. They send in letters of comment to the editors; print fan magazines of their own (which are on a non-profit basis); hold yearly conventions and conferences; and have local active groups.

Other pro science fiction magazines have sections for fans, and sometimes by fans. This encourages the average reader to become active himself. Why not introduce a few fan departments into your mags and see if the readers like them? It is an acknowledged fact that you have a larger circulation than any other science fiction magazine, thus proving that your adventure yarns are liked by a larger percentage of people than enjoy the straight science yarns that several fanzines have been pleading for. So why should you worry?

GERRY DE LA REE, JR.,  
9 Bogart Place,  
Westwood, N. J.

We think a lot of fanmags. We edited one (or helped, at least) a long time ago, called Fantasy Magazine. It still is remembered by you fans. And we think everything of the fans, because we consider all our readers fans.

We have repeatedly recognized that our readers are the unusual type you describe.

Why do you say "other" pro magazines have sections for fans? We have the original "fan section," this very department. Discussions is your section. It is for the readers to use, and their letters make it up. Our editorial comments are here because you want them. Or don't you? Let's have your opinion, readers. Shall we keep our nose out of this department, and simply print the readers' letters without comment?

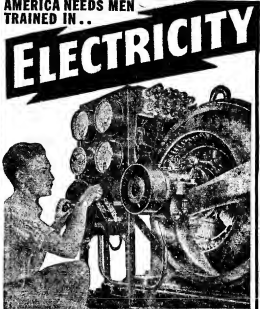
As to why we should worry about satisfying the larger percentage of our readers, we think you know the answer to that. The majority always rules. Many thanks for your intelligent letter.—Ed.

### REPRINTS AGAIN

Sirs:

In your answer to Mr. Burkhart's letter, you stated that whenever a "classic" is reprinted, it is a flop! I most heartily disagree. A competitor of yours published a magazine consisting wholly of classics, and brother, that magazine has been going steadily for a couple of years. Do you honestly believe a publishing company would print stories that don't sell?

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According to you, Merritt's immortal stories, "The Ship of Ishtar," "Moon Pool," "Dwellers in the Mirage"; Smith's superb "Skylark" trilogy; England's "Darkness and Dawn"; Weinbaum's tales, etc., would be outmoded today. Oh, yeah?

VINCENT SCULLIN,  
 c/o John Shields,  
 2914 29th Street,  
 Washington, D. C.

If pulp magazines had been publishing reprints at the time Merritt, Smith, England, and Weinbaum were writing, those classics would never have been written. Therefore, we, as publishers, and as writers, and as lovers of literature, frown on reprinted material which is reprinted indiscriminately simply because it can be obtained for a tenth of the cost of original material. Certainly publishers of reprint magazines make money. But they hold only a circulation of readers composed of those who read the story before, and remember it, and like it. New readers, picking up an old fashioned story, invariably say "I suppose its good—it was good fifty years ago, but personally, it's a little out of my own modern taste. Like old wine. A sip now and then. Not as a regular diet." And that's our answer to why we don't use reprints. We want to give modern writers a chance to live, to create, and become the masters whose "classics" fans to come will plague editors to reprint.

Yes, we do say those old classics are outmoded. Poe is outmoded today. Shakespeare would find no market today. Voltaire would be a piker beside George Bernard Shaw. And has Smith ever excelled his famed Skylark stories?

And as a final test, how many of these stories (even the ones we feature in our magazines) will be remembered two hundred years from now? The Moon Pool? A Martian Odyssey? Already they are out of print, and beyond a reprinting in the medium that does not last, pulp magazines, they will never be remembered. If this is heresy—Ed.

**RESUME FOR 1942**

Sirs:

Another year has slipped by and AMAZING has had its ups and downs, ins and outs. However, mostly up, I'm glad to report. The best cover was Morey's in February; the best back cover, Paul's "City on Uranus," which appeared in April. Stories of notable above-average calibre were: Battering Rams Of Space; Adam Link In The Past; The Lost Race Comes Back; Mystery Of The Martian Pendulum; Adam Link Faces A Revolt; Survivors From 9,000 B. C.; and Big Man. The best two issues of the year were February and the special May Anniversary number. September's was about the worst.

December was the very worst cover, bar none.

MILTON LESSER,  
 2302 Ave. O,  
 Brooklyn, N. Y.

We are interested to know that your selection of the best cover of the year is the same as ours. We liked that rocket ship cover all along. Maybe our art director will believe us now!—Ed.

## NO MORE NEW ADAM

Sirs:

Was extremely disappointed that I was unable to get Weinbaum's "New Adam." I have been an AMAZING STORIES devotee almost since its inception and despite what some critics say, I believe it ranks on a par now even with its "golden age" under the Gernsback dynasty. Sometimes I mourn the loss of such favorites as Francis Flagg, David H. Keller, Bell, Nat Schachner, Bob Olsen, La Master, and others. Yet, with Wilcox, Binder, O'Brien, Bob Williams, Burroughs and others, you have a magazine to be proud of.

The only criticism I can think of is that tales by Wilcox and Binder have been scarce of late. When do we get another Adam Link?

A. G. JARRETT, JR.,  
131 Brucemont Circle,  
West Asheville, N. C.

Yes, readers, it's futile to order more New Adam, By Stanley G. Weinbaum. They have been sold out, and no more will be printed.

We also agree with you that Amazing is in a new golden age. Right at the moment, our authors read every story in the issue, and then write in and tell the editor: "I'll beat this guy next month!" And the result is, each of our writers is trying to write a masterpiece each time. They don't succeed, of course, but they do turn out the best fiction in the field because of this rivalry.

Nat Schachner is not to be mourned. He has appeared in our sister magazine, Fantastic Adventures twice in the 1941 issues. He'll be back with more.

Adam Link is coming back with his top story of the series in our April issue—unforeseen developments not intervening.—Ed.

## FINE ISSUE

Sirs:

I have just finished the December issue of AMAZING STORIES and liked it so well that I just couldn't resist writing to congratulate you on this fine issue. Rod Ruth's cover scene depicting The Secret of Planetoid 88 was swell. Let's have a few more cartoons by Townsend, Newman and Magarian. Paul's doing fine work on the back cover. So, I'll be expecting to see good stuff from him in the January issue.

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And that ends Discussions for this time.—Ed.

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